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Gates and Keys to Bible Books

By

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INTRODUCTION BY

BISHOP JOHN M. MOORE, Ph. D.

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Introduction

THE Bible holds first place in the attention of this generation. Whether favorable or antagonistic the philosopher and the scientist, the statesman and the publicist, the critic and the *literatus* alike are forced to recognize and deal with this great Source Book of extant civilization. Not in the least is the world getting away from it, but on the contrary turning more and more toward it. The nations that fifty years ago were content with their sacred books of the East are now feeling after the secret and power of the Book that made the mighty West. The strong peoples that now bear the load of humanity have thrust into the foreground of human thinking the ideals and religious teachings upon which their strength has been built. This has given the Bible a new standing in the entire world.

There are certain well-defined and substantial reasons for the strengthened position of the Bible in the progressive areas of the race, and also among the people who are now in no small degree reconstructing their thought, habits and purposes. In the last half-century a new type of Christianity has come into the ascendancy in the thinking of the world, in which the Bible is essentially central. For fifteen hundred years an ecclesiastical and sacerdotal Christianity was dominant in Christendom. It offered no open Bible and even denied its adherents access to it. The people were not considered capable of understanding its contents nor of examining them with safety. When Bibles were brought among them orders were issued that they be promptly and piously destroyed. The world, to-day, laughs with scorn at such performances and the fury of such ecclesiastics no longer disturbs honest enquiries after religious truth. The evangelical Christianity that for these fifty years has been aggressive in its activities, assertive in its teachings and vigorous in its living, has won thoughtful recognition from all peoples and has made the world safe for the Bible.

The growing strength of progressive, evangelical Christianity has developed a new and rapidly increasing constituency for this marvelous book. This is especially true in non-Christian and semi-Christian lands. Thousands of groups of people have been formed and are being formed to study, to learn, and to put into effect the truths which the Bible reveals. Their hungry human hearts are finding in its sublime and comforting teachings food that satisfies and nourishes their souls. God is speaking to them through this ancient revelation and they have found it to be a lamp to their feet and a light to their path. Not only is this true with hitherto non-Christian minds, but with souls long imprisoned by the bars of ecclesiasticism and sacerdotalism. These have found a new freedom and have broken the seals of God's Holy Word and are searching the Scriptures that testify of Christ and his redemption. It looks now that the Bible is to have a real chance at the life of the human race. Its message, its truth, and its power will be sought in the next half-century as never before in all preceding centuries. Whatever makes the Bible correctly understood renders high service to humanity.

If the Bible were ever a lost Book, it is not so now. It has been recovered in no small degree from any indifference and neglect into which it may have fallen by a half-century of serious research and diligent study on the part of scholars and thinkers of the highest type. Scientific inquiry and historical critical study have not marred or even scarred the old Book, but they have brought in its electric age and thereby rendered preeminent service to Christendom. Criticism has been much defamed by those who felt that its purpose was to destroy. The real purpose of criticism is not to find fault but to make a careful and conscientious examination of the Scriptures, or any other literature, and to pass honest and faithful judgment upon the facts found and the values involved. The findings of that criticism will depend, to a very large extent, upon the competency, the attitude and the spirit of the critic. Critics have corrected each other and saved the Bible from any hurt from any individual or group however eccentric or unreasonable. The Holy Scriptures have lost nothing of their sanctity, of their divineness, or of their eternal worth by the combined labors of the critical scholars who have diligently, patiently and devoutly sought the truth in them and about them. Instead of destroying, they have made impregnable this mighty fortress of God's revelation.

The danger to the Bible—the record of God's great revelation of Himself to man—lies not in scholarly investigation but in gross neglect. It suffers grievously from ignorance, stupidity and superstitious adherence but becomes luminous and powerful by intelligence, research and loyal use. It gives no mystical merit by fetish devotion but it lifts to virtue by its divine instruction. It offers no shrine to the wayfaring worshiper, but a highway of holiness to those in quest of God. Dwellers in the valleys are denied its glories but souls on the hilltops bask in its eternal light and heavenly glow. It enlarges the mind that thinks its thought and enriches the life that feeds upon its truth. The Bible is no mere gift of God to be received; it is a revelation to be attained. Only as man masters the revelation does he come to know the Revealer. Only as he fathoms the depths of the gift does he find the heart of the Giver. Only as he comprehends the message can he understand the Sender. Getting the Bible is the supreme achievement of man at his best. This requires devout research, faithful study, and loyal devotion to its truth.

The author of this book offers his help to those who seek entrance into the meaning, beauty, glory and power of the Holy Scriptures. For long he has traveled this highway and has learned where much golden truth is hidden away. He brings keys for the locked-up treasures and points out opened gates to the great flowering fields of growing revelation. Many will not see what he sees, nor estimate as highly some treasures that he values. He is simply saying what it all means to him with the hope that his saying it may help his fellow students to find the eternal truth for themselves. Honest views are not expressed for endorsement but for enlightenment. With his own eyes must every man see, with his own ears hear, with his own mind comprehend. Blessed is the man who is faithful to himself, for then shall he be faithful to the truth wherever and however found, and faithful to his fellow-man who aids him in the way. Such an one will here find help and because of it go rejoicing in the God of Salvation.

JOHN M. MOORE.

Dallas, Texas.

Foreword

ESPECIALLY through my early life as pastor and Sunday-school worker, and later, as secretary-treasurer of the Christian Education Movement, I have sought in vain for dependable helps to Bible study, of sufficiently exact scholarship and unencumbered with confusing technical terms and details. On broad lines, in convenient form and easy reference, I wanted ready information concerning the dominant idea in each book.

If we can find this key, new light is thrown on practically every page of each Bible book. Agreeing that this revelation is progressive, and that God reveals His will in accord with the march of humanity from dark to dawn and dawn to day, we must discover the epochs and stages of advance. Otherwise, how are we to get an adequate and proper conception of the providential dealings of the Father with His children? Only then can we understand how He condescends to accommodate Himself to the immediate needs of every age.

This continuous advance would be inadequately marked without close attention to the onward march of the Messianic hope toward the goal of full realization in Jesus Christ. Hence under the head of each Bible book we have given the "Key," the "Christ" and the "Progress." Salient thoughts and practical lessons drawn from each book we are sure will add to the interest and usefulness of the work. With this in mind, we have drawn the "Lessons."

With greetings to that great army of pastors, Sunday-school teachers and workers, and Bible students who have not the time or equipment for an extended and technical study of the Divine Library, we add the hope that they will find here something to make their labours a little more easy and effective.

L. R.

Louisville, Ky.

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Keys to the Books

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis	*Beginning*
Exodus	*Passover*
Numbers	*Murmuring*
Deuteronomy	*Remember*
Joshua	*Courage*
Judges	*Deliver*
Ruth	*Redemption*
First and Second Samuel	*Kingdom*
First and Second Kings	*The King*
First and Second Chronicles	*House of God*
Ezra-Nehemiah	*Restore*
Esther	*Providence*
Job	*Trial*
Psalms	*Psalms*
Proverbs	*Wisdom*
Ecclesiastes	*Under the Sun*
Songs	*Love*
Isaiah	*Salvation*
Jeremiah-Lamentations	*Warning*
Ezekiel	*Glory of God*
Daniel	*Son of Man*
Hosea	*Knowledge*
Joel	*Holy Spirit*
Amos	*Retribution*
Obadiah	*Revenge on Edom*
Jonah	*Go*
Micah	*Religion Undefiled*
Nahum	*Consolation*
Habakkuk	*Faithfulness*
Zephaniah	*Remnant*
Haggai	*Restoration*
Zechariah	
Malachi	*Sun of Righteousness*

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew	*Kingdom of Heaven*
Mark	*Son of Man with Power*
Luke	*Saviour of the World*
John	*Logos* Word
Acts	*Witness*
First and Second Thessalonians	*Advent*
First and Second Corinthians	*Principles of Christ*
Galatians	*Liberty*
Romans	*The Just shall Live by Faith*
Philippians	*Joy*
Philemon	*Christian Courtesy*
Colossians	*Christ All and in All*
Ephesians	*Unity*
First and Second Timothy and Titus	*Sound Doctrine*
James	*Works*
First and Second Peter	*Hope*
Jude	*The Faith*
Hebrews	*The Better Covenant*
First, Second and Third John	*God is Light and Love*
Revelation	*Come Quickly*

PART I

THE OLD TESTAMENT

I

GENESIS

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

THE word Genesis, taken from the Greek version or Septuagint, means "beginning." In this word we have the key to the book. Genesis is the gate beautiful to the written revelation of God. If we enter here, we find a key to every door in the temple. It is a synopsis and foregleam of God's plan for the race.

The truths are important because they are radical and fundamental. We are given an account of the origin of the material world, plant life, animal life, and human life; of marriage, sin, redemption, law, and the Sabbath; of family, social, tribal, and national life; of the chosen or elected people; of war and commerce; of arts, literature, and music. In fact here is the beginning of everything but God. "In the beginning God."

That is the way you would expect the account of the morning of creation to open. If this verse is mastered nothing else need stagger your faith (Heb. 11:3).

This opening verse teaches the omnipotence, the trinity, personality, and unity of God. It excludes atheism, pantheism, polytheism, and materialism. Not, "In the beginning molecules," nor "In the beginning protoplasm," but "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," is the record. In that formless, dateless past there is nothing upon which to hang a calendar, but much upon which to hang faith. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were formed by the word of God."

Over questions of authenticity, inspiration, etc., there has been endless discussion among the critics. Since the time of Dr. Astruc of France (1753), the critics see in

Genesis the hands of at least three narrators—a writer whose chief characteristic is the use of "Jehovah" for the Divine Name, and whose designation is J; another uses "Elohim," and is known as E. These two were the oldest, and originally formed a complete word called JE. E has a legal, precise, formal tone, is theological, scientific, and spiritual. J is easy and flowing, picturesque, and beautifully poetic. The viewpoint is different. In J, God is not conceived as a great Spirit and Infinite Being but is anthropomorphic in conception, and has hands and feet and does His work like an ordinary mortal. These were joined later by a redactor to P (Priestly Code). Then come D and R, etc., etc. Thus the critics cut Genesis into about four hundred pieces and divide it among five or six unknown writers, making it a veritable literary patch-quilt. The book nowhere claims Moses as the author. The heading in our English Bible reading: "The First Book of Moses, commonly called Genesis," does not appear in the original Hebrew; so that its integrity is in no way involved in the question of authorship. All this does not particularly concern us here.

By reference to the Code of Hammurabi, and since the discovery in Egypt of the Tel Amarna tablets in 1887, we know that the art of writing was known, that Abraham is no myth, and that there was constant communication between Egypt and Palestine. Let us further remember that Genesis is neither a scientific treatise nor a history of the world's events. It is the religious history of man in the early dawn of time. That God created the world, that man was made for communion with God; the story of man's disobedience and separation from God, and the beginning and prophecy of redemption—these are the sublime messages of this book.

If the Babylonian stories were used, they were transfigured with a new spirit. Polytheism is rejected for the one true and living God. For the grovelling conceptions of naturalism is substituted the exalted spiritual truth that becomes the basis of our glorious Christianity.

Herein is the miracle; not that this history is inspired but "holy men of old" who wrote the history were. History then, was no more inspired than history to-day. Instead of seeing and fearing natural phenomena as gods, these seers of the truth of history saw God in His world and God's child in the Kingdom of His grace. Time and a soul test are better proofs of inspiration than archæology and literary criticism. God did not write His revelation on skins and papyri but in the consciousness of holy men. Inspiration does not consist, therefore, of a verbal inerrancy, but in a spiritual survival of the fittest.

While attempting to harmonize the two accounts of creation and the creative processes given here, and modern science, let us keep in mind both the aim of the book and the necessity of its accommodation to the minds of men then living. The story of creation is an inspired writing but not a scientific treatise on cosmogony. While the neighbouring nations were worshipping the sun, the birds, the beetle, the Nile, and the crocodile that crawled on its banks, the Hebrew people were receiving such truths as that God is one God, a great creative Spirit, that man also has the divine nature, that sin is disobedience to God. Nature is not to be abjectly worshipped but to be made man's servant to do his bidding.

The scheme consists in the division of the book into ten parts, each division beginning: "These are the generations of":

(1) Heavens and the earth; (2) Of Adam; (3) Of Noah; (4) Of the sons of Noah; (5) Of Shem; (6) Of Terah or Abraham; (7) Of Ishmael; (8) Of Isaac; (9) Of Esau; (10) Of Jacob. The writer moves from the broader to the narrower field; from primeval to patriarchal history. The larger history of mankind is not touched at all, except for the purpose of connecting it with the history of Israel. With the twelfth chapter begins what might be called the second book of Genesis. The first book recites the story from the creation to Abraham; the second book, with more narration and detail,

begins the story of the immediate ancestors of the Hebrew race.

John wrote the New Testament book of the "beginning"; the opening verse being, "In the beginning was the Word." Moses and John were inspired from the same source, and the message of the one helps to interpret the message of the other. Into the twilight of Moses came the "Word" of John like a sunrise on the mountains of Sinai. The smile of God dispels the frown of the law. Moses gives the story of Paradise Lost, and John of Paradise Regained.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

In Genesis we have a drama in which the opening scene shows the sin of man, the curse of God, a withered garden, and a fleeing pair. No sooner, however, does the night of judgment fall upon the world than the Son of promise appears. The rebuke to Satan is a promise to humanity: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel" (3:15). Thus couched in the form of a curse is a blessing. Man will henceforth walk erect, and tread underfoot temptations to evil.

While in these words are held the collective notion (the Chosen People), "this does not preclude a single person as the flower of this people and a gift to humanity, from gaining a signal and perfect victory over evil."

If "the Lord made coats of skins" the first blood was shed. A sacrifice made necessary because of man's sin and a sacrifice for man's protection seems faintly to prophesy the Great Sacrifice. At the first altar of sacrifice, the one of blood is accepted. There may be little significance in that, for God gives the real reason for refusing Cain's offering in the word: "If thou doest not well sin liest at the door." The author of the Hebrews uses the incident to show how the "blood of Christ speaketh better things" than the blood of Abel. Abel's blood cried for vengeance from the ground; Christ's blood cries for mercy for the race.

In Abram's seed all the nations of the earth are to be blessed. Christ was of the seed of Abraham and his heir; not only because a descendant but because He was of the faith of Abraham. We are "heirs and joint heirs with Jesus Christ," not to the riches of our father Abraham but to the eternal riches of our Father in heaven. Then the offering up of Abraham's only son Isaac, the voluntary obedience of that son, and the assuring words of Abraham, "The Lord will provide a sacrifice," all surely point to God's great gift.

As Jacob's ladder established communion between earth and heaven, so Christ between man and God. Even in the time of Nathanael the time had not "fully come." "Thou shalt see greater things than these. . . . Ye shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1:51). Then note the great prophecy uttered by the dying Jacob: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come" (49:10).

History finds wonderful fulfillment of this prophecy in the coming of lion-like David, the Judean, into Jerusalem. The sceptre and staff were destined nevermore to depart from his house. The ideal was not reached in Solomon whose reign was only a prophecy of the coming of the Prince of Peace. The final fulfillment came in Christ, who overcame as the "Lion of the tribe Judah" (Rev. 5:5).

Some critics of rationalistic tendencies doubt the reference of this prophecy to Christ. They belong to that class who would eliminate the predictive element from prophecy and who assert that "the patriarchs saw not the Jewish nation and still less the day of Christ." To this the word of Christ is sufficient answer: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56).

The fact is the Old Testament Church has no meaning —it never would have had existence apart from Christ.

In the life of Joseph we have, if not types, at least some illustrations and, incidentally, analogies between the life of Joseph and that of our Lord, that are full of surprising interest. Each beloved by his father, "came to his own" brethren and they received him not. They sold him for silver as they did Christ and he became their saviour and the saviour of the world. Joseph's fellow-sufferers in the prison, the butler and the baker, remind us of the two malefactors one on either side of His Cross in that one is saved—the other doomed. From the lowest humiliation Joseph, like Jesus, comes to the highest exaltation; the mighty Prince he is, who is a brother full of forgiveness and love.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

Speaking in geometric figures, man is a circle and God is a straight line. Godward is eternal progression. The revelation of this wonderful book from the twilight over chaos to the spiritual inheritance given to the tribes by the dying Jacob, prophesy the noonday of a "new heaven and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness."

Over a dark and formless void there broods the Spirit; then comes light, life, growth, fruit and rest. Marching in stately procession there come higher and higher forms of life till man, the paragon of the world, stands at the goal of God's purpose. With reverential awe we stand beside this black abyss and see emerging at last a holy nation ever accompanied by prophecy specializing and accommodating itself to the different ages in its march and aptly naming each phase of its development. Even allowing that this is a history of Israel written from the knowledge acquired long after all the events narrated, could unaided human genius, conceiving the history as an organic whole and keeping the goal ever in view, have given to the world such a production?

In accord with the Divine program as man multiplied and gradually filled the earth, so man was, at last, to become its lord. While the patent of nobility was given at his creation, yet through culture and rightly adjusted relations to God, he must prove his right to that throne of power. So that man's holiness is the divine and ultimate aim.

Primeval life was retrogressive to the flood when God washed the world clean, reserving Noah and his family for seed-corn. The flood, however, did not thwart the purpose of God in His ultimate aim for humanity. It rather discovered that purpose. It was man that failed, not God. Let us rather say, then, that from the world's birth to the flood there was progress. Men learn that nature has uniform and fixed laws, that human law is essential to the very existence of the race, that when sin is finished it is death, and that human life henceforth must be held in reverence.

In this Genesis of the world, God made three covenants with man. One with Adam with reference to a garden of innocence, one with Noah with reference to a world of human life, and one with Abraham with reference to an earth and heaven of spiritual holiness. We can clearly here divine the epochs of evolution that mark God's manifestations to men. It is humanity's march from a garden of innocence to an earth and heaven of holiness.

This goal was ever in the Divine Mind: the call of Abraham, the choice of Isaac and the rejection of Ishmael; the choice of Jacob and the rejection of Esau; the sojourn of Joseph and his brethren in Egypt and the blessing of the tribes with the special inheritance of Judah are the progressive steps of God in bringing order out of chaos and electing a people to His purpose.

It is thus interesting to trace the great white way of God's plan, and note the stages of progress in the Divine manifestations to men. The closed gates of Eden, the catastrophe of the flood, and the call of Abraham, all preach the unwearied patience of God to reach the goal;

as does also the chosen man, the chosen family, the chosen clan, and the chosen nation.

In the pronouncement of cursing and blessing upon the three sons, Ham, Shem and Japheth, Noah uses an expression that is significant indeed: "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem." This was a prophecy of the seed in which monotheism would be enshrined. To Noah a thought of Shem was a thought of God and instead of blessing Shem he blessed Shem's God, and thus gives a foregleam of the great monotheistic religions that should spring from him: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

Of this race Abraham is first choice, a man who walked by faith. In the great trial on the mount, God brought Abraham and Isaac to see that the latter belonged to God in a more real sense than he did to his earthly father. Isaac himself came to that surrender and thus proved himself worthy to become the father's spiritual heir. For the consummation of the Divine plan men must be chosen who have consciousness of the Unseen, and keen appreciation of spiritual inheritance. For this reason Esau was rejected and Jacob was chosen. Jacob did not remain at Peniel to spend the night in prayer because the restraining hand of God was laid upon him. The God of history, inheritance, and promise must protest that he shall not enter the earth's holy place in such temper, yea that "Jacob" shall enter at all. It were better for Israel to go limping, with the knowledge that he went by the permission of God, than that Jacob should go strutting, in the belief that he had entered by his own shrewdness in appeasing the wrath of Esau with a few cattle and sheep.

In the story of Joseph is seen the Divine purpose drawing ever nearer its goal in the birth of a nation through which God may speak His blessings to the world. Thus we see there may be ebbs and flows but each flow is a high water-mark. There may be eddies but the main stream of purpose is ever onward. The weaver with the ideal cloth in his mind rejects the faulty and uses the good material, and at last finishes the product to match the ideal. So God through this long stretch of years by the process of accepting and rejecting called at last a people, but has not yet realized the ideal. He has not yet turned out the finished product; neither has He stopped His loom.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

Peter says that "eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us." This makes both of them a type of salvation by destruction. As the future inheritance of the human race was saved by destruction of the wicked so are we saved by the putting away of our sins. As shown by the flood and Sodom, sin carries its own penalty. It spells physical death. Sin is suicide.

While Abraham was "in the world" he was not "of the world." He so recognized his relations to the world and so used them as to win great worldly success. He so rose above his environment of sin and idolatry in his own father's household and so walked in earth's darkness and heaven's light as to make great heavenly success. As in Abraham's great sacrifice he became more truly God's own, so we, by absolute sacrifice of our own will, come at last with blessed assurance to the house of our Father. And that no sacrifice of home, or friends, or child, is too great if we can but find Him.

Lot made a different choice. Worldly success loomed large to him. "Did she marry well" was a question he understood. He had better starved with his family on the uplands than to have lost them in the sinful prosperity of Sodom. Abraham and Isaac were one in harmony with God, but Lot was saved as by the skin of his teeth, and his children lost. Abraham heard the wooing voice of the Father and followed; Lot fled before His fiery judgments. The Ten Commandments were in effect long before Moses wrote them on tablets of stone.

Of Jacob and Joseph we have largely spoken. The close study of these lives gives us a far clearer vision of God as a God of history. And to His faithful children it gives an uplift of hope, for Jehovah "stands within the shadow, keeping watch above His own."

In the case of Joseph we are given a keener appreciation of the purity of life, and the integrity of character. He recognized everything in his possession as a talent from God. It is no virtue to be poor and no vice to be rich. Fame is no bar and to be unsung no "open sesame" to the courts of God.

Two of the most necessary institutions to the existence of our modern civilization and to the preservation of society, are marriage and the Sabbath. If age can give veneration, good fruits, justification, and the sanction of God's authority these institutions should have a secure place in the heart of humanity.

Is this vast material universe simply a cold impersonal force, deaf to our cries of pain? Is matter the supreme eternal thing? Are we simply a part of this huge unconscious machinery held or driven by a fate over which we have no control? If we reverently study the story of creation we see that over it all there is an all-powerful, all-wise, and all-loving Father.

Some general lessons from the garden of Eden are: that sin is disobedience to God, that life is communion with God, and death separation from God. Sorrow is disciplinary and the wilderness struggle must come before the city of holiness is reached. Temptation, like a serpent, charms its victims. It never stalks but glides up, silent and unseen. It lies beside our path and strikes poison into the lowest part, the heel. Only when man has fallen prostrate are its fangs struck into his highest nature. When it sleeps it seems dead, but when it wakes no fish, or bird, or beast is more agile. While it gores not with horns, nor strikes not with paws, nor lacerates with teeth, it is our adversary with every inch of its sinewy coils. Curiosity, appetite, and ambition are enticingly beautiful as they glisten in the Eden's sun of innocence, but these hellish evils at last crush to death. Sin "makes cowards of us all"—and Adam feared to answer the voice of his Lord. Like one dose of arsenic that poisons our body, one taste of sin sends virus to the soul. "We can step over the precipice but we cannot step back." In the presence of temptation we disbelieve God's goodness and trust to the lie of the tempter. "Don't bar yourself from the pleasures of life," he says, "take a drink; be a man; enjoy yourself."

The reason for God's choice of Abel's sacrifice instead of Cain's is found, not in the altar, nor perhaps the sacrifice itself, but in the different tempers of the two. "If thou doest well" implies he did not do well. "His countenance fell" shows the brother hate that had lain long in his heart. They are types of two classes. Outward culture often murders inner holiness. They should be brothers in deed and truth. The fact remains, however, that too often they are not. Other lessons of this first murder we have already drawn.

II

EXODUS

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

THE key-word to this Book is "passover." The name Exodus, meaning "the way out," marks the great epoch which this solemn feast, the passover, is designed to memorialize. God's way out is sometimes circuitous. When the schooldays in Egypt of these children were over "there arose up a king that knew not Joseph." In the days of the "Shepherd Kings" (the Hycsos), Joseph, who came from a race of shepherds, was welcome, but Pharaoh, by his sore oppression, drove the people to a willingness of accepting a "way out," and "thus the wrath of God was made to praise Him."

There was a double purpose in the plagues: first, to whip Pharaoh (Rameses II) into submission, and second, to discredit before all eyes, the gods of Egypt. The statement that "God hardened Pharaoh's heart" has perplexed many. There are three words used, and in each one Pharaoh himself is shown to be responsible. There is no proof that God in any way debauched this king's heart. His courage and resolution is made stronger, his eyes are blinded to prudence, but as for God's demoralizing his soul—never! The river Nile and the frogs were both objects of worship. No priest dared profane the temple by entering it with lice on him. The Nile turned to blood, and first frogs, then lice, became a plague. The gadfly and cattle evoked deep reverence. The flies became a pest, and the cattle were slain with murrain. The priests scattered ashes as a token of blessings, not to make boils and blains which they became. Isis and Osiris are deities supposedly able to protect the people from hail, and the former, with Serapis, from locusts, but they must have been "asleep or on a journey." The east wind so much adored by them has become their destruction. "The heavenly hosts," to which they offered ardent prayer refuses now to give them light, and last and more significant still, Egypt oppressed the firstborn of God, and Egypt's firstborn must now die. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

Exodus, like the other writings of the Hexateuch, is assigned by Bible critics to unknown persons of four literary schools: Jehovistic (Jahwist), Elohistic, Deuteronomic, and Priestly. They are referred to as J, E, D, P, given in order of their age. Besides these, there are subdivisions all worked out with great labour and ingenuity and each part of Scripture assigned to one or the other of these imaginary writers or schools. Into the discussion of these interesting processes we cannot enter here. Suffice it to say there is involved much assumption in a "program" of this kind, though it is unjust to call in a wholesale way such criticism "destructive." In Dr. Lyman Abbott's words, "There are also silent witnesses outside either the national literature or the national life to the substantial truth of the story of Exodus. I believe there never has been found in Egypt any figure, symbol, picture, or monument which tends to throw doubt upon the narrative in the Book of Exodus or to indicate that the story, even in its minutest details, is inaccurate."

The key-word "passover" has a triple significance. The passover of the sprinkled blood or the redemption of God's people, the passover of the firstborn or death to their enemies, or the passover of the Red Sea with both of these thoughts implied. So that scenes of both death and life are witnessed. Songs are heard on but one side of the sea—atheism has no songs. It is a passover from serfdom to freedom, from polytheism to monotheism, from idolatry to the worship of Jehovah. A passover it is from an unorganized horde of slaves with no laws, leaders or aspirations, little knowledge of their history, and small vision of their destiny, to a nation of free men, organized under the laws of God, unified by a common purpose and desert life, and refined and spiritualized by tokens of the Great Unseen and the dream of an inheritance reserved to God's chosen people. Thus, while on the face of it is seen only the passover of Israel from Egyptian bondage, in the soul of it is seen the successive stages of humanity from the darkness of sin and superstition.

Note, too, the passover as seen in the life of Moses. Forty years at Egypt's court, then to Midian, forty years there, then back to Egypt and back to the wilderness, where the last forty-year period begins. One more passover from Nebo and the hero of the Exodus and the ages, is gathered to his fathers. In Egypt the passover was eaten hurriedly, with loins girt and sandals on and staff at hand, ready for the journey, and robes ungirt and flowing.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

The author of Hebrews speaks of Moses as "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt" (11:26). Moses, then, it seems, cherished the Messianic hope, and we see what a measureless horizon this newly-inspired prophet came to have for the doing of his work and God's will.

What striking memorials are the passover of the death and passion of our Lord! The "bread of affliction" (unleavened) was eaten with the "bitter herbs" and not joyously as in other feasts but with great awe and in fear of the rustling wings of the angel of death. In this feast are seen prophetic symbols of Christ's death—ransom for sin, His salvation of all who believe, and His judgment upon the faithless. Surely "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

The Book indeed teems with the types of redemption through the blood of Christ. He is a lamb slain, a ransom given, an atonement made. Note that the blood must be applied and all conditions met, or death is the penalty. Then, too, the blood is sprinkled on the doorposts and not on the threshold, to be trampled underfoot.

The New Testament tells us how the Christian truths of baptism, in the sea, the heaven, the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the sacraments were to abide forever. Could any institution of sacraments or any program whatever have been more strikingly adaptive to the preparation of humanity for the Incarnation?

The "scapegoat," "Aaron's rod," the "manna," the "rock," the "ark of the covenant," with the "mercy seat," and the "altar," all give different phases of the work of Christ in the world's redemption. The "heave" and "wave" offerings, the first motion being perpendicular and the second horizontal, seem to foreshadow the manner of Christ's death. That the lamb of the passover was to be without blemish, that the blood had the saving power, and that the flesh gave strength to leave that earthly bondage will certainly, at least for us, never lose its spiritual significance. Because in time past there have not been lacking those who spiritualize to ridiculous absurdities let us not be deprived of the many blessed Messianic references that mean so much in the unifying of the history and in the eternity idea of the I Am in Jesus the Christ.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

Both the name and key of the book ring with the same martial cry of the great Captain—"Speak to Israel that they go forward." The beginning of Exodus marks a revolution in Hebrew life and the birthday of the Hebrew nation. Out of the gloom of the patriarchal age when now and then an individual had a heavenly visitation, we see slowly emerging a nation with written laws, a holy priesthood and a pledge of God to tabernacle among men.

In God's progressive revelation we have seen how by successive steps of individuals, family and tribal life, the nation has now come to view. Not that here is the consummation of heaven's purpose, for the fact that a "Kingdom of priests" and a "holy nation" are chosen, prophesies a divine aim for the future. Civil laws were given to govern the state, ceremonial laws to govern the Church, and moral laws to govern in the inner life. In the theocracy, however, now being established it is hard to distinguish between Church and State.

The civil laws passed away so far as they were local, the ceremonial were fulfilled in Christ, but the moral laws are as eternal as God. They are not true because God gave them at Sinai, but because they were true God gave them. He wrote them on stone to illustrate their permanency but He knew that their eternity was inherent in man and to the end of time would be written on "fleshly tablets." Of these "ten words" the first two refer to idols, applicable to this host just come from an idolatrous land. God's Name, to which He has given new expression, must not be used in vain. The Sabbath, the world's first institution, must be kept holy. "Honour thy father and thy mother" must have been difficult of execution in camp life but perhaps not more so than the remainder:

> "Thou shalt not kill";
> "Thou shalt not commit adultery";
> "Thou shalt not steal";
> "Thou shalt not bear false witness";
> "Thou shalt not covet."

The first four refer more especially to our obligations to God, and the last six our obligations to man; hence the two tables. In this Book we have made a grand march of progress but we yet camp far from the Gospel.

The moral law is, in a sense, God's challenge to man's self-righteousness. God made it all as an organic whole, and to fail in one point is to fail in all. Failure is in man's futile attempt and not in the law nor in its design. Thus the failure on man's part to meet the challenge makes him despair of his own righteousness and, like the rich young ruler, seek for a higher good. By the works of the law could no flesh be justified, and yet no man is free from its obligations. The keeping of them will not earn entrance to heaven nor the breaking of them escape penalty. It is in short a revelation demonstrating our own insufficiency.

The words of the law are: "Not come near" but of the Gospel, "Let us draw near." Then man is not always to be baffled. In Christ, God is love and "love is the fulfilling of the law." From the smoking mount the multitude fell back with the fear of death, but went gladly up the grassy slopes of the mount of Beatitudes to receive the words of Life. The multitude camped at Sinai on the same anniversary date on which a multitude, more than fifteen hundred years later, came to Pentecost; but what a distance between them! At Sinai three thousand lost their lives, but at Pentecost three thousand found their lives (Heb. 12:18–29).

There is, too, an advance of revelation in the Name of Deity. In the primeval world, "El," or God, is used and in the early patriarchal age it has become "El Shadday," or God Almighty, to be later known in Israel as Jehovah, the God of redemption. To Moses was given the marvelous revelation in the "new name" I AM that I AM, the eternal self-existent, changeless God. This name sounds the depths of religious philosophy. His nature then can be expressed only by itself. He is the God of Isaac and of Jacob; the vital eternal Present. He made known His way to Moses (His habits and character), His acts to the children of Israel (Psa. 103:7). The revelation then given to Moses is as vitally ours now, as it was his then. This is a long reach toward the final revelation that "God is love."

The Book is unique in that God is not represented in it in bodily form. We can see how to have used a similitude would have been perilous among a people just led out of idolatry. It is interesting to note the growth of

Moses from an attitude of self-confidence to that of faith. The people see the contrast between true worship and superstition and between earthly force and divine power. In the Paschal sacrifice they see God's favour as a free gift. At Horeb they are overawed by the same God with whom the covenant reveals the privilege of communion. Their privation chastens them and Amalek's attack teaches them war. The Decalogue, the priesthood, the sacrificial system, and the cloud and fire, all have their lessons to teach this twilight race.

All this, and more, in the development of Israel is the meaning of the Book of Exodus. In the realization through Moses of "the pattern in the mount" the visual manifestations of God in Hebrew ritual, the dwelling of God in the tabernacle, the dawning of the national theocracy, and what makes for the permanency of all the written books of the covenant, show the unceasing march of God at the head of His people with back to the formless void, and face toward the fulfillment of the earnest of the nations.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

What a lesson here of the instability of earthly fame! Joseph had saved the lives of Egypt's fathers and now they persecuted Joseph's brethren. There is seen, too, in the case of Moses, the truth that "a prophet is not without honour save in his own country." "Behold," says he, "they will not believe me." He fears less the power of Pharaoh than he does the lack of faith and love among his own people.

Herod slew hundreds of innocent infants and the people acquiesced with seemingly little interest in the event. Jesus took little children in His arms saying, "of such is the Kingdom of heaven." In this age of Christ's Kingdom, the cruel treatment of a child, on a public street, brings a mob flaming with indignation.

Moses is a striking figure of a man who rises above his age and refuses to be moulded by the "tendency of the age"; whom riches and fame and power could not swerve from his heaven-born purpose. Moses, educated, cultured, and refined is not so fastidious as to recoil from his duty. He turns from a brilliant and learned court, to cast in his lot with the slaves of a great nation of which he was the adopted prince.

Let us learn from one glaring mistake of this marvelous man. He struck a premature and hasty blow when he slew the Egyptian, and was sent to the wilderness of Midian for forty years. He had to learn that God nowhere encourages mob-law, or insurrection. Moses must first secure authority from his people through the elders to speak to Pharaoh, then obtain the permission of the king before the people were led out.

My brother, if God lays upon you His requirements, you need not postpone like Pharaoh with the hope that they will grow lighter. You had best surrender this side of sorrow than where remorse will not bring relief and your house be left unto you desolate.

Sin, like slavery, destroys the self-respect, debauches the will, and degrades the manhood. The sinner has a hard master. "The wages of sin is death." Only freemen who have broken with the bondage of sin reach an inheritance of the "liberty of the children of God."

We see God's protection in the outstretched rod of Moses, His guidance in the pillars of cloud and fire, His deliverance in the freedom of a million slaves, His redemption and atonement in the symbols of the ceremonial law, and His sovereignty over all things in the matter of the plagues, the manna, the quails, and the rock. As we journey this pathless pilgrim-life we are assured that the "Lord knoweth the way of the righteous" and that while here, "we have no continuing city but seek one to come."

III

LEVITICUS

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

THE key-word to the Book is "holiness." Directions are given for making "clean" or "holy" the person, the family, the social relations, the houses, the money, lands, animals, priests, tabernacles, altars, vessels, etc., etc. All these sacrifices of atonement and ritual for ceremonial cleansing are designed to teach the holiness of God, whose ultimate purpose is the holiness of man. It is to this end that reverence, the true basis of worship, is made the dominant note, and the ever-present and pervasive spirit of the ethical is present. The ceremonial systems of the pagan nations were false to the core. How can truth with reference to God and His relation to man be made to triumph? There are two ways: one way is to discard them altogether as the prophets advised, and another to fill the forms with a new spirit as the priests advised.

The pagan systems were a part of the state and the wealthy priests were its officials, and the worship independent of the people. The Levitical system was supported by free-will offerings, and the value was not in proportion to its cost. The pagan system compelled sacrifice and men refused at the risk of life, and the larger the sacrifice the more effectual the offering. In Israel's system the sacrifice was voluntary, and the poor man's turtle-dove was as acceptable as the thousand beeves of the rich man. While in the one the spirit and experience of the offering—the ethical element—never entered, in the other entered the consciousness of sin in trespass offering, a consecration of service in burnt offering, and thanksgiving in thank offering. In one, the sacrifice appeases wrath and saves from penalty; in the other, it purifies the soul and saves from sin. In the one, a sacrifice is made by man to a god inferior to him in order to appease his wrath; in the other, sacrifice is made by God for man and to bring repentance to the sinner. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Excepting two small references, there is nothing historical in the book. It is a ritual of the newly-formed Hebrew nation consisting of offerings or sacrifices, feasts, and purifications. The sacrifices are:

1. "Burnt Offerings" were daily, and are first and most important of the ritual. "A male without a blemish" must be presented at the "door of the tent of meeting," the offerer lays the hand on the head of the victim, he then "kills the bullock before the Lord" when Aaron's sons "present the blood" and sprinkle it on the altar. Flayed and cut to pieces it was wholly consumed by a fire on the altar. Turtle-doves were permissible as sacrifices by the poor.

2. "Meal or Meat Offerings" were vegetable or bloodless, and consisted of fine flour, oil, frankincense, and salt, but without leaven were burned "upon the altar for a sweet savour." It is a gift to God and a prayer for favour and blessing from Him.

3. "Sin Offerings" provided for the man who sins in ignorance, and showed the fundamental need of an expiation for sin. This sacrifice was graded according to whether intended for anointed priest, congregation, ruler, or private person. The choice of victim depended on the rank and ability of the one who sinned. Infinite holiness thus shows equity, but no wink for even unwitting sin. The blood of the bullock is poured by the priest at the base of the altar, and a part is put on the horns of the altar "before the Lord." All of which shows the dominant thought to be expiation.

4. "Guilt or Trespass Offerings" represented the atonement under aspect of reparation for trespass on the

rights of others. Hence the ram must be appraised by the priest. Not only the amount unjustly taken but a fifth part more must be restored by the offender.

5. "Peace or Thank Offering" very well expresses its nature by its name. Part of the victim is burned on the altar, part goes to the priest, and the remaining part to the worshipper. All of which signifies pardon and communion.

As a part of the law of holiness there were six feasts: Passover and Unleavened bread in which the passover lamb was eaten on the evening of the fourteenth day. Then came unleavened bread for seven days, when the priest waved the sheaf of the first fruits and at the close of the seven weeks or fifty days came Pentecost, or Feast of Weeks. The Trumpet ushered in the glad Sabbatic or seventh month. On the tenth day of this month came The Day of Atonement, and closely following, The Tabernacles. The Trumpet, Atonement, and Sabbath were "set" or "appointed" feasts. The Sabbatic feasts were observed each week, every seventh year (The Sabbatic year) and every fifty years came the Jubilee.

The main thought in sacrifice and feast is seen to be "holiness to Jehovah." It is clear, too, Jehovah has a historic mission for the nation He would make peculiar, separate and holy. The supreme glory of God is not in His almightiness but in His holiness. As shown on the golden "holy crown" of Aaron "Holiness to Jehovah" is in accord with the divine purpose the ideal and goal of His chosen people. This is the meaning of the holiness laws and laws of bodily defilement, of priestly consecration, and solemn vows. In view of this, we see an ethical as well as sanitary aim in laws relating to uncleanness of animals, childbirth, leprosy, issues, and defilement by dead bodies. There is here powerfully presented the necessity of unquestioning obedience and full of consecration of body and soul to God; both a command and a promise shines in the glorious words: "Ye shall be holy for I, Jehovah, your God, am holy." No nation can rise above the ethical conceptions concerning the Supreme Being. In this sense, we may speak of the evolution of God.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

Turning from the types of these sacrifices to the New Testament we find the Antitype. Christ is the fulfillment, the completion of all this unsatisfying ceremony. "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." As the offerer must personally present the victim before the door of the "tent of meeting" and lay his hand (lean hard) on the head of the intended sacrifice, so to God, in person, we must present the blood of Christ and lean hard on our Victim and Redeemer. In the burnt offering, the whole victim was consumed on the altar by fire, thus typifying the fiery suffering, the atoning sacrifice, and representative obedience of our Christ.

We have been estranged from God and His Son, who is also our Friend, is the mediator in the peace offering and gives His life to heal the breach. Ascending from the altar of obedience to His Father, He sends invitation to us. "The feast is prepared; come, all things are now ready." In Leviticus, too, is shown how we must not only repent but recognize one great Sin Offering and confess our sin of ignorance and rashness to our Great High Priest that He may plead the blood before our God. It is significant that the blood in this case was not sprinkled on the sides, but on the horns of the altar. In the case of the whole congregation the blood was sprinkled, not only on the horns, but seven times before the veil separating from the mercy seat and on the great annual Day of Atonement the blood was sprinkled by the High Priest on the mercy seat itself. The guilt offering shows God defrauded of His due, and man pleading the obedience and righteousness of Christ as his guilt offering. Thus in the burnt offering He is our consecration, in the peace offering our mediator, in the sin offering our expiation, and in the guilt offering satisfaction in our behalf to God.

The high priest, Aaron, prefigures the office and work of Christ. The four colours of his garment had their meaning. The purple and gold foreshadow His royalty, the scarlet His surrendered life, and the blue the mercy of the "better covenant." The breastplate shows Him as judge, the girdle as servant, the urim and thummim as prophet. The tinkling music of the golden bells on his garments prefigures this assurance that our great High Priest still lives to make intercession for us. Oil in the Scripture typifies the Holy Spirit and anointing oil poured in consecration on the head of the high priest prefigures Christ (Anointed One). "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord hath anointed me" (Lev. 4:18).

How striking the ritual of the sin offering that directs that the flesh of the victim, "they shall carry forth without the camp and burn." This foreshadows not only the manner of Christ's death but that He should die outside the camp of legal Judaism. In the light of this we clearly see the interpretation of the assertion: "We (Christians) have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" (Heb. 13:10–12). Of the two goats on the great Day of Atonement one was slain and the blood sprinkled in the Holy of Holies, and the other symbolically receiving the sins of the people was turned into the wilderness. Here is shown the two aspects of Christ's work; the dying One who makes sacrificial expiation and the living One who bears away our sins. In the lamb without blemish we see the perfect Christ, in the white robe of the high priest the purity of Christ, and in his cleansing symbols of His washing of regeneration. The mercy seat, the ark of the covenant, the shewbread, Aaron's rod, and the altar, all conform to the many-sided work of Christ. But the whole system is shot through and through with the ultimate aim and prophecy of the whole program:

"Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

Since pitching the tent at Sinai, as recorded in Exodus, only one month and no territory has been covered. Another interesting epoch, however, is reached in God's unfolding revelation to His chosen nation. The Hebrew ritual is given, the Tabernacle is dedicated for use, and the "pattern in the mount" was realized in material forms. Jehovah had heretofore dwelt in the heaven of heavens, making rare visits to earth as when He gave the moral law and Sinai smoked and rocked under the touch of His foot. Henceforth He will draw near and speak in a "still small voice" from out the "tent of meeting." Henceforth He will hover in guidance and protection in the cloud over the sanctuary, and symbolically live in the shekinah. "And I will set my tabernacle among you, and I will walk among you" (26:11). The laws of Israel are classified by Bible critics as follows:

1. The Ten Words (Decalogue);
2. The Book of Covenant (Ex. 20:23–33);
3. Deuteronomic Code (Deut. 12–end);
4. Levitical Code.

Leviticus is placed last of the Pentateuchal books, and even as late as the age of the Exile. It received its final form from the hand of Ezra.

On the other hand, by the sanitary laws Jehovah purposes to make our bodies worthy "temples of the Holy Ghost." He teaches that there is a religion of the body, and that health ministers to holiness. "Cleanliness is next to godliness" is not the whole truth for it is of the essence of godliness. Here we have a school of the principles of hygiene, the enforcement of sanitary laws for the promotion of public health, the stamping-out of infectious diseases, and the provision of baths for the many compulsory washings. Surely this is sufficient to give Leviticus high claims of advance in the history of human progress.

When to this we add the humane provisions for the alleviation of the conditions of human slavery, brotherly regard shown the stranger, and the endearing love shown the neighbour as given in the royal law, " Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and the kindly treatment of the poor and the sick—surely then we can but see in it all a mysterious power that leads humanity ever onward to higher levels of physical, moral, and spiritual well-being.

And yet there are those who think that the ceremonial laws certainly cannot minister to the ethical progress of the Hebrew nation. Birds and beasts of prey, animals with split hoof that do not chew the cud, fish without fins or scales, and all reptiles were excluded. While these simple general rules of discrimination so needful to that (nascent) people are not binding on us, let us remember that these were types that purposed to lead to an Antitype, that what is fit for food in one climate may not be in another, and that if this people are to understand, the laws must be few and simple. Yet these laws seem to be written deep in the physical nature of man. The food allowed as " clean " is used by practically the whole human family. The people who have disregarded these laws of food are classed with those of gross degradation. Among nations of culture there is an instinctive repugnance to dead bodies, reptiles, and to the use for food of " unclean " animals. While we say the " laws do not bind us," yet is it not significant that we instinctively obey them? In Deuteronomy the priest and the Levite seem to be one and the same, " The priest, the Levite." In Leviticus the phrase is " The priests *and* the Levites."

While the ultimate purpose in the sacrifices was for the most part mystery to the child-mind of this early race, for even now " great is the mystery of godliness "; still, sufficient light sifted through to give them a consciousness of sin, the worth of the sinner, the need of an atonement as a covering, not of sin, but of the sinner, and a dream of a day when the Light will break through and save. Not even excepting the passover, the sacrifices when given were all prophecy. The great High Priest had not entered "once for all," and even yet He has not returned to give blessing to the nation of Israel. The ingathering of the great harvest proclaimed by the Feast of Trumpets and Pentecost was not yet come, and above all, and still in the future, the Jubilee looks forward to a glorious day when the "holiness of Jehovah" shall be ours and we shall enter the final "rest that remaineth to the people of God" and realize the "earnest expectation" expressed by the apostle Paul (Rom. 8:19–22).

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

The laws of this age are not applicable to ours in all their details and yet the eternal principles of these laws throw a flood of light on modern civic and social problems such as: Church and State, the holding of law, labour and capital, marriage and divorce, etc. For instance, the poor man is given the same rights and privileges under the law as the rich. The welfare of servant and master is alike kept in view. Then a close study of this Book would give clearer views on capital punishment. No premium is put on transgression, and justice is not thwarted by maudlin sentiment. As shown in the Trespass offering, no law of man can discharge an honest debt. There is no bankrupt law in God's Kingdom.

There is a present day Leviticus. Thus by contrast we see the obvious lesson that we should "present our bodies a living sacrifice." As the blood was poured out at the altar and the flesh burned, so shall we pour out our lives at the altar of God's service and by His help destroy all fleshly lusts. In the "Meal" offering we see the demand for a consecration of the fruits of our spiritual labours, and how a man's works may be burned and he, himself, be saved as by fire. For the offering shall be "to the Lord," and honey and leaven are prohibited as emblems of decay. The "salt" is demanded as meaning preservation and the "covenant of salt" prophesies unfailing and incorruptible covenant between God and man. "Whether therefore ye eat, drink, or whatsoever we do let us do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

As Peter plainly shows, we, the body of Christian people, are the "holy nation," the "royal priesthood." For a Christian to sin is a serious matter, for, like Levitical priests, they defile the holy place. Not now is the blood sprinkled in the holy place but in the "Holy of Holies" by our great High Priest who has "entered once for all." The sons of Aaron were washed with pure water, but we must have the "washing of regeneration." They were decked in spotless robes of white but we are covered with "a robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decketh like a priest" (Isa. 61:10). Then, they were anointed with oil, we with the Holy Ghost. They had the symbolical touch of blood to ear, hand, and foot, we take the life of Christ in the heart that the power of His blood may cleanse every member and empower them for His service.

We cannot fail to see the significance of the portions of the sacrifices designated for the maintenance of the priesthood. Every one that toucheth them (the portions) shall be holy, or set apart. These portions were the choicest of the sacrifice and they were "heaved" and "waved," and this symbolically received from God and eaten at this table. The "Meal" offering was eaten without leaven in a holy place. Paul gives us the application to this new dispensation. "They which wait upon the altar have their portion with the altar." Even so did the Lord ordain that they which proclaim the Gospel should live of the Gospel (1 Cor. 9). Here we see not only the divine call of the ministry, but a divine command that God's people shall give a consecrated portion to its support.

IV

NUMBERS

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

THE name "Numbers" gives little hint of the real character of this Book. It is true the census is taken of men available for campaign service but this is merely incidental. The key-word is "murmur." Nearly the whole time covered was spent in wandering. Unbelief is the real basis of their murmuring and their wandering was the result. In solemn covenant they promise obedience to God but they seem blind to the fact that disobedience to His appointed means and agents and murmuring against His providence is included in that covenant.

The swift punishment by Jehovah indicates the serious character of this sin. "The fire of the Lord burst among them and devoured in the uttermost parts of the camp." The sentence of utter annihilation was averted by the intercession of Moses, and exchanged for forty years of wandering. For people who had been accustomed to the fish, onions, and melons of Egypt, the manna was not ideal, but did God promise them a road without hardship? Then the manna stood between them and death, and a proper spirit of gratitude would have invested it with a peculiarly delicious flavour.

"Moses heard the people weep throughout their families." This drove the meekest of men to murmuring. "Have I begotten them that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom?" As usual, murmuring runs into foolish words and gross exaggeration. Then there was murmuring because Eldad and Medad brought religion into everyday life by prophesying outside the Tabernacle. Miriam and Aaron murmured because of their jealousy of the heathen wife of Moses. The ten false spies came from the exploration of Canaan murmuring about the many giants in the way of conquest. The people caught the spirit of murmuring, raised a rebellion and Joshua and Caleb are narrowly saved from death. Murmuring against Moses as a leader and Aaron as a priest grew and spread until a well-organized revolt is led by Korah and others. When the ground swallowed them up, the people raised the murmur that Moses has killed the people of Jehovah.

It is hot and dry; the water fails and the murmur rises to a clamour for water. If this is an offense there are mitigating circumstances. Instead of tender pity Moses shows hot temper, and strikes the rock in anger. Like Jonah he is enraged that God should not send judgment instead of mercy. For this God barred Moses from the entrance into the earthly land of promise. On account of the roughness of the road from Mount Hor to the borders of Moab, the people took up the whole catalogue of grievances. They murmur against God and against Moses, and bewail the lack of water and the light bread they loathed, and worse than all, God and Moses conspire to bring them out of Egypt "to die in the wilderness." Then came the judgment of fiery serpents followed by a brazen one on the pole, with the promise of a life for a look.

The rebellious are left in the wilderness. They are judged at the "Graves of Lust" and "Place of Burning." These are testing times and in the new Kingdom there must be perfect accord and unswerving integrity "even unto death." They murmured, and instead of obedience to the command "Go Forward" they "wandered." It took them nearly forty years to make an eleven-day journey. The census taken at the beginning and close of the Book shows how this grumbling affected their growth. At first, the number of males above twenty years old was 603,550; at the close, 601,730 warriors. There are three divisions in the Book: Advance, Retreat, Victory. The retreat covers nearly all the time. Yet on this the record is almost wholly silent. "The way of the ungodly shall perish." It is plain to see that murmuring means unbelief, rebellion, disobedience, wretchedness, and death.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

In Egypt the firstborn were hallowed unto the Lord. The Levites are here substituted for them in holy service. The former exceed the latter in number, and for their redemption Moses takes "five shekels a piece." So, by contrast, the Christian is "redeemed not by silver nor gold, but by the precious blood of Christ." Yet here we have a bloodless atonement that shows contrast between the old covenant and the new. God now calls for our life. The life of the firstborn of the beasts may be sacrificed but not of men. Leprosy in the New Testament is a symbol of sin, but in the Old covenant it *is* sin, and their cleansing included guilt offerings which seemed to prophesy the day when One should come who would dare to lay His hands on the loathsome outcasts.

Not only is the passover to be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, but they shall not "break any bone of it." All of which seems not only to foreshadow Christ's death and passion but the condition of the body when taken from the Cross. As is clearly shown in Revelation 1, the golden candlestick with its several branches, the sacraments of His Church and the lives of His children shine the more brightly by the darkness of this world. Every church and every life should be a candlestick of beaten gold, and thus be worthy to bear the Light of the world. Christ certainly used a daring symbolism when He cried: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of man be lifted up." What can it mean but a prefiguring of our Saviour's condescension? The serpent is a symbol of sin and "He hath made him to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:2). While, in a sense, there is "no beauty in him that we should desire him," there is healing from the poisonous, fatal bite of sin.

The manna was not, as men for ages thought, "heavenly bread." "Moses gave you not that bread out of heaven." "I am the bread of life." Nor any more did Moses give them the true water of life. Christ is the Rock, stricken and smitten by the anger of this world, from whom spring "wells of water." As Moses bore the sufferings and murmurings of Israel, so his mediation imperfect from a partial knowledge of the Father's nature and purpose is the prophecy of the only Son who was one with the Father. "My servant Moses," with whom God speaks "mouth to mouth," becomes "My only begotten Son in whom I am well pleased."

The wonderful Balaam prophecies, we must confess, are of doubtful reference. Let us not read too much into this heathen political prophecy. It breathes rather the spirit of an oriental sword than of the redemptive love of the Prince of Peace, though we must confess this is a book of heavenly kingship, which fact may influence the type of its prophecy. By the way, it is significant that of "the trilogy of the law," Exodus is the prophetic book; Leviticus the priestly book; and Numbers the kingly book, thus illustrating the three phases of Christ's work: Prophet, Priest, and King. Then, also, let us note that when Miriam represents prophecy, Aaron priesthood, and Moses the law, all three died before the Land of Promise was reached. Christ came to fulfill the law and the prophets. Only Joshua (meaning Jesus) can lead His people into the Land of eternal inheritance.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

This is a book of training, of perfecting of system, of organization and ministering for conquest. To this end the census is twice taken of men fit for service. Division of the tribes is made, three tribes in each of the four divisions, forming a hollow square around the Tabernacle. Seventy elders are appointed and signals are given, whereby the soldierly may be easily massed against an unexpected foe. If Numbers is literary fiction who is the hero?

Jehovah's purpose gleams far across the desert and into the eternal future. Miriam drops from the line of march. Aaron lays aside his priestly vesture and goes to God, and Moses, from the top of Nebo, with the yearning vision of the earthly Canaan in his dying eyes, is gathered to his fathers. But these are only incidents in the eternal march of the divine forces, destined to reach a new earth in the creation of a new humanity.

Moses could have been king but if he had any personal ambitions in that direction they do not show in the record. He joins his life with the stream of Jehovah's purpose. In his resigned obedience to the voice "Get thee up into this mountain" he exalts the Supreme Royalty and far, far beyond that earthly Canaan he appears on the mount with the Son who comes to "bring life and immortality to light." He had ever obeyed the command "Speak to Israel that they go forward," and from Mount Nebo to now, this ringing cry of God has ever been the same.

While the immediate aim of God is to prepare this people for colonization and a more perfect theocracy, a heathen seer, Balaam, first gets a vision of the ideal future. It is only with reference to this that the present has any meaning. When sacerdotalism was full of prophecy and the Aaronic priesthood came like an ægis of protection to religion, and men are barred from direct access to the oracle, we clearly see that while these things mark an epoch of progress, the day is yet in the far future when "no iniquity is discerned in Jacob and no oppression is seen in Israel," and upon the "bells of the horses" is written, "Holiness unto the Lord."

While Leviticus and Numbers are books of preparation, how fitting that the law of offerings to Jehovah should precede preparation for military conquest. Yet what think we when we read "Then he [Moses] heard the voice speaking unto him from above the mercy seat that was upon the ark of the testimony"? This certainly sounds anthropomorphic. We must know, however, there is no form, no visible manifestation of God, simply a Voice. The law is covered by mercy, and from mercy comes the message. Only the mediator, Moses, dares stand in the "tent of meeting" to receive the oracles, and a veil intervenes between him and the Voice. All of which show the exercise of the law of solemn separation. Yet in the matter of Eldad and Medad, Moses exclaims, "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God all the Lord's people were prophets." In the question he shows with what perfect abandon this prophet-mediator has given himself to the ultimate aim of God for Israel, and in the expressed desire he prophesies the day when there will be no "wall of partition," and all will have direct and free access to the oracles of God.

Then that wonderful priestly benediction looks far down the future: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee, the Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee, the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace" (6:24–26). In this we have the protection of the Father, the grace and mercy of Christ, and the comfort and peace of the Holy Ghost.

In this Book advance steps are taken, also, along social lines. Instructions are given concerning the six cities of refuge which tends to secure more perfect justice to him who unwittingly kills a fellow-man. The law of the "water of jealousy" (5:11–31) was for the protection of innocent women under the unfortunate system of polygamy. The law relating to the passover shows Jehovah's aim to be an increasing generosity toward the stranger. "Ye shall have one ordinance both for the stranger and for him that is born in the land" (9:14). In 10:1–10 is given an account of the introduction of instrumental music and its complete dedication to Jehovah.

The struggle for what some are pleased to call "woman's rights" began very early in human history.

The peppery question asked by jealous Miriam is full of meaning. "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses?" being interpreted means "Is man to monopolize everything?" "Is a woman to have no consideration?" Surely there is humour in the next verse: "Now the man Moses was very meek above all the men that were upon the face of the earth." Well, he needed it when the fair daughters of Zelophehad of the tribe of Manasseh appealed to him, firing at him such questions as these: "Because we have no brothers are we to have no vote and no possessions?" And the Lord decides in favour of the women.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

If time is a talent, this wandering host buried it. Thus we see that the soul may be saved and the life lost. A signal warning to us, is this wandering host, against unbelief that sets us adrift with no impelling force, no worthy aim. The false spies held no keys to gates of future possibilities. As in the case of Caleb and Joshua's fidelity to truth, a high moral courage and unswerving trust in God are keys that unlock the gates of a heavenly Canaan.

The old proverb, "God's judgments go lame," is certainly not exemplified in this book. The man who with high hand dares to attack the safeguards of the social life and defy the law of God "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" is court-martialed and stoned to death. The sons of Korah, rebellious, sacrilegious, disobedient, are swallowed up by the earth; loathsome leprosy clothes Miriam as penalty for her jealousy and presumption; and when the people were gluttonous they were doomed to die of plague, and saved only through interposition of Moses and Aaron. We make so much of bodily affliction and so little of soul disease that we are apt to think these penalties are too hard, and far outweigh the character of the offence.

In the life of Balaam, that seems such a strange mixture of clay and gold, we have the common sight of a nominally religious man who confers with flesh and blood; one who tampers with conscience and hesitates at the call of God; who attempts to make heavenly demands conform to earthly desires. Men often set aside the clear decision of God, extort the dubious consent of God, and with hushed conscience carry out their own selfish ends. The command of God becomes an angel of warning and, at last, a threatened judgment, and when his eyes are opened to the fact that he is attempting to ride over all roughshod then woe be to him, there is no retreat.

Rich and varied are the lessons to be drawn from the conversation between Moses and his brother-in-law Hobab. As in the case of Israel for Hobab, so the journey full of hardships and with a divine plan and aim and its possibilities for good has a certain charm to the men that are hardly yet willing to leave "houses and lands and brothers and sisters" and accept the invitation to "come with us." A good question for me and you is: "If every member was just like me what kind of a church would my church be?" Do we help our church to commend itself to such men of talent who would be "eyes unto us" and do we do our part to make true the promise of Moses "come with us and we will do thee good"?

In a football game the true man sinks his personal ambition to do team work. This life is a desert journey full of hardships and with a divine plan and aim and outlook, not always in accord with our personal desires. We pool our interests, we do team work, we see our trials at last in the proper light. They are our friends, to mortify the deeds of the flesh, to empty our hands of earthly ashes, that we may seize a heavenly inheritance. Yet there are many motives for undergoing trial. Cramped quarters and scanty food and no pleasures now, will mean, in the future, a large house, "fish and onions," and high social rank. The divine call however is to join the Israel that has no promise of earthly gains nor earthly terminus. To learn that punishment follows the satisfaction of a groveling desire is a hard lesson. "He that loseth his life shall find it."

Then, in this wilderness life of ours, tenting and marching, suffering and retreating, with our eternal destination so dim and hazy in the future, we not only wonder whether we make progress toward our inheritance, but in our weak hour we ask "Is it all a dream?" "Shall we die here in this terrible wilderness?" "Does death end it all?" Ah, as surely as birds and branches and spice-breezes told Columbus there was a new world; as surely as the luscious Eschol grapes were proof to men of faith of the Canaan inheritance ahead, just so surely does this "fond desire, this pleasing hope" tell us of a welcome awaiting us in our heavenly home. "If it were not so I would have told you." Does God mock the instinct of a migratory bird? And when it flees the rigours of the northern winter, does it not find a southern summer? When the Israelites rested content in Egypt, God's urgency stirred them with a yearning desire which He did not mock. Yes, the reality will far surpass the dream. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

V

DEUTERONOMY

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

DEUTERONOMY (second law) implies the rehearsal of laws already given. This accounts for the constant use of the key-word "remember." This word or its equivalent occurs about thirty times. The writer represents the hosts of Israel, who after forty years of wandering, assembled in sight of the Land of Promise a new generation, that had not heard the promulgation of the law from Sinai, facing a new country and new duties. Moses stands before his people, and makes three separate addresses.

"Remember" is the word for such an occasion. "Remember how God led you out of Egypt and through the terrible wilderness; how He guided you by the pillar of fire and scourged you with the serpents. Remember how He fed you with the manna and let fall His judgments on Miriam and the sons of Korah; how God preserved your clothes that they waxed not old; and slew your fathers for their worship of the golden calf. Remember how the law was given at the crown of Horeb and broken at its base; broken by me in letter but by you in spirit."

The first address is directed mainly to remembrance of God's care, the second to obedience of His laws, and the third to the keeping of His covenant. Thus we find that while we use "remember" as the key, it is by no means the ultimate aim. Remember God, obey God, love God, are the three steps that bring us into the throne-room of this book of marvelous power. One of the controlling motives of the author is a desire to help eliminate idolatry from the nation. To this end he would infuse his people with a spirit of gratitude to God for His mercy and kindness in the past. He pleads that the love of God should never cease to warn their unworthy hearts (7:7, 9:4–6), and shine forth even in days of dark affliction (8:2–16). In melodious periods of eloquence the author appeals to every noble motive to stir the heart of Israel. Moses exhorts them to build memorial stones and observe throughout their generation the blessings and cursings of Mount Gerazim and Mount Ebal, that they might not forget God nor His laws; that they might commune with Him and become like Him in His hate for sin and love for the sinner.

Practically all modern Bible scholars assign the Book, or at least its revision, to about the seventh century before Christ. See 2 Kings 22. We think the preponderance of evidence is in favour of Manasseh's reign at the time of the Book 650 B. C. Many good authorities claim the Assyrian period about 800 B. C. as the time. It is important to know that, as a whole, Deuteronomy does not claim Moses for its author, and we must bear in mind that whatever the date or authorship, the spiritual and moral lessons are the same. While the scope of our plan will not allow us to enter upon exhaustive proof, it is evident Moses did not write the words: "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab. . . . And the children of Israel wept for Moses on the plains of Moab thirty days" (34:6–8). This was written at least a month after Moses died. "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses." These words appear to bring the Book down to the prophetic period. Then note the words "These be the words which Moses spake unto Israel beyond Jordan" (RV). These opening and introductory words of the Book are certainly conclusive that the writer was writing in Palestine, which Moses never entered. Furthermore, those of us who believe that the divine method of progress of revelation has been gradual, seem to be shut up to the acceptance of the later date of the Book or a revision based on the early Mosaic documents. Deuteronomy, it is true, is a reapplication of the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 20:23), but with such a marvelous extension and such a new and spiritual application, that it becomes far more than a book of rehearsals. "Thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart," etc., for instance, is far removed from the mere externals of religion found in Leviticus and Numbers. In this connection weigh carefully the import of my words under "Progress."

No wonder the finding of such a law in Josiah's time caused a reformation of the kingdom. No wonder that such truths as this divine deposit handed down by the master spirits as a rich heritage should fire the heart of this great lawgiver to such earnest exhortation to remember them. Important it is that they should "teach them diligently," "bind them for signs" and "frontlets" and write them on the posts of their houses and gates. To forget would mean the paralysis of the individual spirit, and the death of the national soul. And then, when we read God's program for blessing, through them, the nations of the earth, we find further reason that this Chosen Nation should remember and cherish these heaven-born ideals.

The great assemblage is dismissed with a song and a benediction. A duet it is, by Joshua and Moses, replete with the exhortation to "remember the days of old, the years of many generations"; then a blessing by Moses on the heads of the tribes with the assurance that God will not forget. "All his saints are in thy hand" and underneath are the "everlasting arms."

> "Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
> Lest we forget, lest we forget."

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

There is a close analogy between Moses and Christ. Like Christ in infancy he was hidden from the murderous hand of the king. Moses came to "his own and his own received him not." Each came from a royal home, delivered his own people, was mediator between God and man, fasted forty days, visited a mount of transfiguration, wrought miracles, founded a new kingdom among men, and was taken away before that kingdom's great triumph was made manifest.

The Book is so near the spirit of the Gospel, that it is quoted frequently in the New Testament, usually introduced with "It is written." Our Lord, in His temptation in the wilderness, draws His arrows from this quiver. "It is written," says He, "man shall not live by bread alone." "Tempt not the Lord thy God." "Worship the Lord thy God." Warnings these, against sins of materialism, presumption, and idolatry.

The essential features of the religious program of the Hebrew nation are realized in Christ. He, indeed, is the true Israel. He is the "servant of Jehovah" and by the great prophets this term is used so interchangeably for both, as to bring considerable confusion to our study of Messianic prophecy. So that, whether in the kingship of Israel's theocracy, or in the prophetic vision of her seers, we find the meaning and goal in Christ. Thus, apart from the Old Testament, Christ is an enigma, and apart from the New Testament, only a dream. Then, in turn, apart from "the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world," Old Testament sacrifice was a superstition, and New Testament grace a myth.

"His body shall not remain all night on the tree" (21:23) has an interesting application to John 19:31, showing how "he keepeth all his bones" (Psa. 34:20). Some think the following a direct reference to the personal Messiah: "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto me" (18:18). The infallible test of a prophet, however, given in the closing verse, would be inappropriate here if the individual Messiah is meant. Yet this passage is quoted by Peter as referring to Jesus Christ. The far more precious meaning than direct reference to a single individual is

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the promise of an order of prophets that should culminate in Christ. This is the thought of Peter, for he shows that "all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after" form one organic whole in God's plan and "foretold of these days" (Acts 3:24).

Standing as we do in "these days," on the mount of holy vision, we see the long line of prophets impelled by a mighty Unseen Hand moving down the stream of history, unconscious of their unifying purpose and their vital part in the plan, whose glorious aim is to enrich every future age, and whose final goal is the Christ, the completion of the plan and the perfect satisfaction of the world's yearning hope.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

Little time (forty days) and no territory has been covered. Yet, as we shall see, there has been, along every line, an advance that is marvelous indeed. The great impersonal thing called the nation, had hitherto hidden from view the individual life. The life and purity and hope of the individual is henceforth to secure the safety of the nation. This marks a revolution of thought from the old way of thinking. A man's relationship to Jehovah depends no longer on his citizenship in Israel. Great emphasis is placed on the importance of worship at the central sanctuary. The tendency here was to unify the nation and prevent, to a great extent, the imitation of the vile worship of the Canaanites.

To this end, Deuteronomy gives us the royal law of love which Christ says is the first commandment of all. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," etc. Now there were some incidental references to man's love to God, but this Book makes that the fundamental theme and marks the sudden epoch of change from abject fear to implicit trust, from God the All-Powerful to God the All-Loving; from Him who strikes with the judgment of leprosy or death, to the Saviour "who brought thee out of the land of Egypt." When we consider that the two great laws of love to God and man that are the fulfillment of the law and prophets, are of the very body and essence of this Book, we begin to understand how Christ and the Apostles so frequently pointed their words with its truth.

In Exodus thirteen, the children are to be taught the ritual of the ceremonial law, but in chapter six here, the divine writer quoting the words elevates them to the highest spiritual plane. He, indeed, would have them taught these commandments of love as the divinest thing that would bring them at last to that heaven of a complete revelation: "God is love." Thus we can see how he strikes a deadly blow at idolatry. Men will no longer in fear bow in the "cold starlight of God's creative energy" but with glad and loving spirits receive the genial sun-warmth of His unfailing love.

In paganism we have the pitiable spectacle of man seeking God; in the religion of Deuteronomy and Christ, the condescending love of God seeking man. This writer's aim is to put into the individual soul that energizing and impelling power that will drive it through the golden dawn of man's love to man, to the millennial day of man's perfect love to God, or *vice versa*, "the golden rule of God will bring the golden age to man."

Deuteronomy catches the vision of the order of prophets through whom is to come the ever unfolding revelation of God unto the perfect day. "I will raise them up a prophet," etc., is a very remarkable utterance in view of the fact that each age believes itself to stand at the pinnacle of enlightenment.

The four stages of development from barbarism to civilization are usually hunting, herding, agriculture, and commerce. Israel had reached the stage of agriculture but the laws prohibiting the taking of interest among themselves, cut the sinews of foreign commerce. Thus worldly success is sacrificed for the sake of protection to the spiritual life of the "peculiar people." The circumstances were peculiar and we do not claim this prohibition applies to modern life. In this connection the words quoted by Christ from chapter 8:3 are pregnant with meaning: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Ships, and cities, and commercial trade, do not necessarily make a nation great. In the eyes of heaven those things from the mouth of God that enrich human life and give high and spiritual ideals are the things most worth while.

The Deuteronomist proceeds to show how these marvelous truths may be made practicable. In the protection and freedom granted women, Israel surpassed surrounding nations. Religious prostitution was prohibited; to wrong a betrothed woman was a capital crime. No longer a chattel but a person, she takes her place beside the father to be equally honoured by the children. Justice for all is provided in the establishment of courts and the appointment of judges. "Hear the causes," he demands, "and judge righteously not only between brother and brother, but between him and a stranger." The judgment shall be for "small and great alike." Slavery is greatly mitigated in that not only men, but women, shall be freed the seventh year and given a good start in life. The slave is not deprived of any of his rights as a man, and is ever a brother.

We see the real glory of this law of love in its relation to the poor. That grapes and corn be left in the field is not sufficient. If this were all, the rich man's burden of responsibility would be easily shifted. The poor have feelings and must be respected. "Thou shalt not go in his house to fetch his pledge." Thus the protection of the Almighty is thrown over the home of the poor and the helpless. If the pledge is an upper garment it must be returned before night, for in his poverty it may be all he has to protect him in his sleep from cold. Because "he is poor" the hired servant must be paid before sundown. The reason given for the limit of punishment to forty lashes is very significant: otherwise "thy brother would seem vile unto thee." How patiently is God teaching each man that the next and furtherest man is his brother. If a man grow insolent, and forgetting this law, inflict a wound on his brother, that brother has the right to refuse everything but the infliction of a similar wound on the insolent one. Thus he is rudely wakened to see the poor, vile wretch he struck was his brother.

The king, if he should be chosen, will have to come under obedience to this law of love. He must feel his responsibility to God, is forbidden the lust of the flesh, he must have hands free from the bribes of money, and above all, acknowledge the poorest, weakest man as his equal in rights before the laws of man and God. Yea, these laws of sympathy and kindness extend even to the animal creation. The mother-birds and the young and her eggs must be protected, and the ox that treads out the corn must not be muzzled. The grounds for these laws in Deuteronomy are an appeal to the moral sense. Their breach now is an abomination or folly or a sin. Sins are no longer ceremonial but moral; all men are brothers, and God is good.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

At the burning bush, forty years before, Moses had complained: "I am not eloquent but I am slow of speech." After reading the three great addresses as reported by the Deuteronomist, we can now answer the question Jehovah asked Moses: "Who hath made man's mouth?" The man of stammering tongue became the "golden mouth" of Israel because God was "with his mouth" (Ex. 4:12). Let no divine commission stagger your faith. With God all things are possible.

As Israel, in sight of Canaan, takes a review of the forty years' pilgrimage, so we, in sight of our heavenly inheritance, are in best frame of mind to review and take to heart the lessons of life's rough pilgrimage. We can never escape the past. History is the prophecy of destiny for the man or the nation. Read aright, history is another Bible, that complements the Bible of special revelation and throws the searchlight of truth far down the future, showing life's pilgrimage as an organic whole and giving vision of the "I AM" the eternal now. The blessings and cursings of Deuteronomy are promise and warning to us. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Then, my brother, if you are fearful of the road ahead, "Consider the years of many generations, ask thy father and he will show thee and thy elders and they will tell thee" (32:7). What a picture is that of Moses on Mount Pisgah! He has dreamed of that goodly land by day and by night, since eighty years before he prematurely struck the first blow for the freedom of his brethren; and now he stands in sight of the realization of these dreams only to have his hopes dashed to the ground. If there were no reward beyond the grave what a spectacle of injustice would be a life like this! What a pathetic prayer he makes that God would let him "go over"! God's inscrutable answer is too often unheeded by you and me: "Speak no more unto me of this matter." Earth is too small for the full display of God's providence. Paul was compelled to bear the thorn on earth, and learned in heaven the reason why. Christ drank the cup to the dregs and went to His Father for a fuller revelation. Moses is refused an entrance to his earthly Canaan only to catch the vision of open gates to a heavenly inheritance and an unclouded light on all the dark problems of his wilderness road. Only in heaven is it "daybreak everywhere."

In that tender picture of God's unfailing love in Moses' closing song, the young eaglets must have been astounded at the mother's action as she "stirreth up her nest" until they fall helpless from the eyrie, but as she "beareth them on her wings" and "they learn to fly into the milky baldric of the sky" there comes at last discovery of love's thrilling history. "And Moses dies," and with the single exception of the Son of Mary, there is taken from Israel the greatest man that ever blessed the earth. And while the key-word of this Book is "remember" and while it is a book of memorials, "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." No open gate of earthly promise and no memorial stone for Moses. "His ways are past finding out." Just one question: When men reach the end of a voyage, whether short like that of John the Baptist or long like that of Moses, why should they not go ashore?

The warnings against sudden prosperity do not apply then to Moses. Most people are anxious for a test of this kind. The danger is, that when earth is bright, heaven loses its charm. This host that had known nothing but want are about to step into vineyards that they planted not and into houses that they builded not. It is a timely warning the Deuteronomist gives that they "forget not God." God's purpose in the wilderness journey was to train a nation to know that "man shall not live by bread alone," and that "A man's life consisteth not in the things which he possesseth." They go into the Holy Land as tenants of Jehovah. The title is tentatively vested in the tribe. No man owned a foot of the land. Jehovah had the authority to allow a man to "eat grapes in a neighbour's vineyard" and to "pluck ears" from his "standing corn" and absolutely prohibit the land's cultivation every seventh and fiftieth year. So we are "His stewards," His tenants on these earthly bounties, and praise and love is the rent we pay. Your work and mine, if done to the glory of God, must be done with reference to the good of the tribe. "No man liveth to himself." This powerful principle of love, as applied by Deuteronomy to the everyday life, has wrought marvels in the cold selfish world, and will continue the work of its transfiguring glory until is ushered in a "new heaven and a new earth" in which dwelleth righteousness.

VI

JOSHUA

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

JOSHUA was separated by the Jews from the Pentateuch (Torah) though there is little reason for doing so as it continues the history of the Genesis of the Hebrew nation. The critics contend that the documents used in the formation of the Pentateuch are in evidence here and in addition a Deuteronomic writer styled D^2 (Driver). Here is an army of the desert mustered for a war of conquest against a nation of warriors skilled in all the arts of civilization inhabiting walled cities and especially prepared for a stout resistance. Of course, " courage " is the key-word to this Book. The die is cast and the crisis on. Jordan is the Rubicon, and it has been crossed. The great war of extermination is waging and above the din of the battle we hear the words: " be strong," " be of good courage," " be not afraid," " be not dismayed." Hitherto we have had the " rod of Moses," henceforth we have the " spear of Joshua." Preparation, drill and dress parade have been succeeded by the grim reality of war. The alarm signal of the " silver trumpet " is succeeded by the " ram's horn."

The very terms of possession call for the courage of a martial spirit: " Every place wherein the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours " (Deut. 11:24). Now " Moses was very meek " and must give way for Joshua, who by temperament has been fitted to lead the band of Hearts Courageous. The matchless lawgiver gives place to the dauntless soldier. The new leader showed his courage in the wilderness by his victory at Rephadim, and his bold denial of the " evil report " of the ten spies. The supreme test of his courage, however, came when, after the death of Moses, God says, " Now therefore arise"; gird up your loins for these new responsibilities. Your most powerful earthly friend is dead, but this is not the time for mourning. He who is greatest that has been and will be until Christ is born at Bethlehem, has passed over to his heavenly Canaan. You cannot fill his place but you must succeed him, and you can fill your own place.

The hosts of Israel stand at last on the brink of the yellow Jordan overrunning her banks. It took a man of courage born of faith to give the command to the priests: "When you are come to the brink, stand still in Jordan." Then, too, note the fearless challenge of this man of iron to the "Captain of the Lord's hosts" that stood before him with drawn sword, and his persistent marches around the walls of Jericho with unarmed soldiers. From the battle of Rephadim through the long years of war until the grand old veteran stands in the Ebal valley to make his disbanding speech, Joshua shows himself a man unmatched for courage, in all Hebrew history.

At the return of the twelve spies, Caleb was the spokesman of the minority report: "We are well able" rings like a slogan of defiance to the enemy and shows his unwavering faith in Israel's God. At the age of eighty-five this lion-hearted old man proposed as his share Kirjath-arba, among the mountains, the Anakim giants whom this redoubtable old soldier soon routed. The others less noted showed brave spirits. Othniel, Caleb's son-in-law and hero of Debir, won a bride for his bravery. The two young men that volunteered as spies to Jericho did a perilous thing indeed. Rahab, whose quick wit saved these spies, put her life in jeopardy for the sake of Israel's God. Her courage, as we learn from the eleventh of Hebrews, was faith-born. "Sin makes cowards of us all." Adam, after his sin, heard the "voice of God and was afraid." The golden wedge was stolen and the soldiers of Joshua fled before the soldiers of Ai. In so far as courage failed not, the land of promise became the land of possession. No wonder that through the Book is heard the ringing cry of assurance: "Be of good courage."

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

The Greek form of Joshua is "Jasous," or Jesus. Moses the law is dead, but Jesus the Gospel is alive forevermore. "For what the law (Moses) could not do, God sending his son (Joshua), etc." Let the scarlet rope by which Rahab saved the spies speak to us of the blood of Christ who is our passover. These may not be intended types but they, at least, illustrate the central theme of God's revelation. How anxious Rahab was that she and her house be spared. When Joshua's soldiers, in their seven days' march around the wall, saw the scarlet rope, do you not think they remembered that terrible passover night in Egypt, and how they, too, feared lest the passover angel should fail to see the blood on the doorpost? How could they forget it with Jordan's miraculous passage just behind them, and when they had observed the passover feast for the first time since they had left Sinai? The "Jesus" of the Book is a man of war, but the Jesus of the Gospels was the "Prince of Peace." Along the same road that Joshua had soaked with the blood of his enemies came Jesus "healing all manner of diseases." Yet what shall we make of the assertion of Christ: "I came not to bring peace but a sword"? To be at war with unrighteousness is far better than to "cry peace when there is no peace." No cleanly man can peacefully sleep in mud. If Jesus is the Prince of Peace, Joshua gave the people rest. "The Lord gave them rest" through Joshua. This prefigures the "rest that remaineth to the people of God." The author of the Hebrews declares that "If Joshua had given them rest, then would God have not afterwards spoken of another day." So we conclude that as Joshua fought to win rest to his people so the "Captain of the Lord's Hosts sheathed his sword only when the Christ came, who brought the peace that passeth understanding" (Heb. 4:8).

The institution of the cities of refuge is at last a reality and they are standing lessons of mercy to succeeding generations. Whether intentional or not the names are descriptive of Christ and His work: Kadesh, or "holy"; Shechem, or "shoulder"; Hebron, or "fellowship"; Bezer, or "fortified"; Ramoth, or "high," and Golen, or "joy." Here is the picture of a Holy One from on "high" who promises "fortified" places for the weak; who bears the government on His "shoulder," and offers fullness of "joy" to all who are subject to Him.

We have, too, in this Book, a glimpse of the genealogy of Christ. Salmon, armour bearer of Joshua, married Rahab, and their son was Boaz, who married Ruth; their son was Obed, and his son was Jesse, the father of David, from which house, a thousand years removed, was born our Saviour.

These theophanies, such as the appearance of the "Captains of the Lord's hosts," are certainly faint anticipations of the glad day when the Word would be made flesh and dwell on the earth. Those earnest ones who meditated on the revelation of God could not fail to see that the promise to Abraham was only partly fulfilled, and that Balaam's prophecy and the dignity and honour promised Judah were yet to come.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

The river Jordan is crossed, and twenty-five years are covered by the Book. The nomadic life has come to an end, and the wandering tribes have been assigned a settled estate. They have reached their majority and now claim their inheritance. They have reached the years of self-help, and never again will faith and works be divorced. The sun did not pour down its fire upon the heads of his enemies but stood still, according to the poet Jasher, until Joshua completed the victory. The promised land was much larger than the land possessed, for the title reads: "the land upon which the sole of your foot shall tread." If a path is made through Jordan or the walls of Jericho fall, Israel must meet the conditions given. The manna no longer feeds them, but the old corn of the land. The pillar of cloud and fire no longer guides them, and they are made to seek not a sign, but the great Invisible One. In all this we read the process of God's revelation.

Miracles are wrought only when absolutely necessary. They came only in great epochs of Israel's history. They cease when Jordan is crossed and the first great city is taken and the name of the Lord God omnipotent is duly impressed. The order of spiritual development is first the pillar of fire as in the wilderness, the ark of the covenant as at Jericho, and at last at the battle of Bethoron the absence of all visible symbols. Heaven's miracles are uncomplimentary to any age as one "that seeketh a sign." We are glad to live in an age that has found "the more excellent way," and can say with Paul: "When I became a man I put away childish things." We find then in the book of Joshua a marvelous advance in its uplift of spiritual vision. In the wilderness day, to an extent, "faith" was lost in "sight." The day has now arrived when sight is lost in faith. When the Church militant becomes triumphant, the order will be reversed for the last time, and faith and hope will die in Love's eternal presence.

While a miracle was wrought at Jericho, the army was ordered to march unarmed about the wall and trust in the Great Unseen. A miracle of grace was wrought in the heart of a heathen harlot and her name is added to the honour roll. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not" (Heb. 11:30–31). Note here that the faith of the soldiers and Rahab does not excuse them from strenuous works; and I come again to point you to this marriage of faith and works. Israel is learning now that Jehovah is a covenant-keeping God. Dreams are being realized and prophecies are being fulfilled.

In the naming of Shiloh for a religious center and Shechem for a political and civil court, we have the first intimation of God's desire to separate Church and State and to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and unto God the things that are God's." A recently found manuscript tells us how Joshua imposed tax on the people and reinstated much of the Mosaic ritual neglected in the wilderness. Forty-eight cities of the Levites are well distributed that the people in all parts of the land may enjoy religious privileges.

While the establishment of the cities of refuge marks progress in the security of justice for the murderer, some writers fail to see anything but murder and injustice in the destruction of the Canaanites. Let us note that their sin was finished. They had been warned by the destruction of the cities of the plain, the marvelous history of Israel in the wilderness, and the miraculous crossing of the Jordan. Yet they were implacable, knowing the judgments of God, and that they which commit such things are worthy of death (Rom. 1:31). The first house entered in Canaan by the Hebrew spies was that of a harlot who believed. Through belief in the living God any others could have been saved from death. Then again, He who gives life may take it and in His own way. He often chastised His own people, using their enemies for the lash. God's purpose to give the world, through His people, civil and religious liberty, and to work His will for the enrichment of the race, was sufficient justification for ridding the world of this wicked, unrepentant people. History is full of just such judgments; for instance, Sodom, Nineveh, Babylon and Rome.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

While courage is the salient characteristic of Joshua, he also gives us lessons of trust, obedience, fidelity, and service; all of which he announced in his speech to the two and a half tribes. "Take diligent heed to love the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments and to cleave unto him with all your heart and with all your soul" (22:5). Like Abraham, he commanded his house after him, and modern fathers would do well to take heed to his unwavering determination: "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." Like Jackson, he tarried in his tent in prayer, but came forth to answer them with a strong thrust of his spear. Like Cromwell his motto was: "Trust God and keep your powder dry."

When Israel failed in trust they were tricked by the Gideonites, and learned the difference between credulity and faith; when they failed in self-exertion they were chased by the soldiers of Ai, and learned the difference between presumption and preparation.

In the wise economy of God, a lazy man is allowed to freeze in the mouth of a coal bank, and to starve in the midst of a wheat field. This was one of the lessons Israel began to learn on the dark day when Moses left Nebo for his Father's house—the lesson of self-help. The summons, "Now, therefore, arise" that came to Joshua came to all Israel. It came to you when your father died and his burden of responsibilities fell on your shoulders. At first you wondered whether they would crush you, but with the sharp call of your capabilities to active service they developed to such a wonderful extent that you could hardly recognize your former self, and were amazed at the waking of dormant powers you scarcely knew you possessed. "Whosoever hath to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have" (Luke 8:18).

And beautiful to see, no envy lurked in Joshua's great, generous soul. He urges them to "give diligent heed unto the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you."

In the march around the walls of Jericho we have lessons of how power comes from unquestioned obedience to God. On that seventh day, when Israel marched with unbroken steps, unified with a faith that was truly spiritual and exalted, and with an expectant trust in the Unseen, they stood on the highest eminence of divine power that they had ever reached, and but seldom reached again. When God's Church, with faith that is simple and unquestioning, answers the call of the great Captain to march to the hardest task and through the darkest night, as sure as God stands in the shadows, the dawn will come, and with it the energizing power that will overwhelm the "citadels of sin." But so long as an Achan lurks in the camp, Israel is not of "one accord," and no baptismal pentecost can come. "No man liveth to himself," and when one member suffers the whole body suffers. As the priests marched before the people, touching the Jordan till it parted and encircling the walls till they fell, so, to-day, may the ministers of God, holding the greatest commission ever confided to human hearts and hands, lead the Church of God from conquest to victory. In this Book, we hear the martial call to war, the shock of battle, and the shout of victory. We are soldiers mustered for fight in the Church militant. Ours, too, is a war of conquest, and our Joshua accepts the challenge of Satan. Will you prove to be a worthy "soldier of Jesus Christ"? If we prove to be true and valiant to the end of the war, we shall "receive our portion," not in earthly Canaan, but in the "inheritance of the saints of light."

Achan seemed to forget that "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do"; and of the Gibeonites who vainly believed they could reach the throne of spiritual power by the practice of pious fraud; and the faithful record of Rahab's life of shame, and its transfiguration by the mercy of Israel's God. "Let us fight the good fight of faith" and never cease till every enemy is conquered and we stack our arms at Heaven's gate.

VII

JUDGES AND RUTH

THE KEY TO THE BOOKS

RUTH is properly a continuation of Judges, and was so classed until the fifth century after Christ. Little wonder then that the key-words are so nearly alike: for Judges "deliverance" and for Ruth "redeemer."

Here is the story in a nutshell: (1) "And neither did they drive them out." (2) "And they did evil in the sight of the Lord." (3) "And the Lord sold them into the hands of their enemies." (4) "Nevertheless, the Lord raised up a judge to deliver them." These warrior judges did not come to their office by inheritance, but as occasion demanded, God "raised them up." While they were deliverers, their authority was transient, and lacked hereditary dignity. Disobeying God's command, idolatry remained about them, and, in consequence, there was endless warfare between a permanent evil and a transient institution. Had they in the first instance obeyed, this institution need not have failed, but in the face of such national decay, the author does well to lament that "there was no king in Israel."

Between Joshua and Saul, fifteen judges are named:

Othniel delivers his people from Mesopotamia; Ehud from Moab; Shamgar slays with oxgoad six hundred Philistines; Deborah (and Barak) delivers from Jabin and Sisera; Gideon delivers from the Midianites; and his son Abimelech, from the Shechemites; Tola and Jair of whom little is said; Jephthah delivers from the Amonites. We know little of Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon. The last judge mentioned in this book is Samson who delivers from the Philistines. The lives of Eli and Samuel are treated in 1 Samuel. The story of Micah and his priest shows a worship of Jehovah corrupted, and the horrible story of the Levite shows the depths of degradation into which multitudes of the nation had fallen. Both echo a cry for a deliverance from sin. The beautiful story of Ruth, however, is assurance that all had "not bowed the knee to Baal." The remnant of Elimelech's family is redeemed from darkness by the faith of Naomi, and from distress and want by the mighty Boaz. The Book of Ruth closes with the genealogy of the world's Redeemer. Ruth forms one of the five Megilloth, or "rolls" read at public feasts.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOKS

The derivative meaning of "Judges" is "Saviours," and the repeated assertion that "God raised up a judge" is the spirit of "Him that raised up Jesus," reiterating through that dark, sinful period the gospel of a judge that will "save the people from their sins." There is no tabernacle, and but one mention of the High Priest; the faithful Phinehas, who seems by his individual devotion, to have provided for the "ark of the Lord." The fires on the altars of God were dead, and the skies of man's hope were shrouded in a pall of gloom.

Dr. George Adam Smith thinks a type of Christ is found in Deborah's song, but the darkness is scarcely relieved except by the story of Ruth, the Moabitess. She was excluded by the law, but received by grace; poor and friendless she lay at the feet of Boaz, meaning "Redeemer" or "in Him strength." Orpah (scull) turns back to death; Ruth (satisfied) cleaves to Naomi (God is sweet) who brings her to Bethlehem (House of bread) and to Boaz who, like Christ, was the Bread of Life, the Lord of the Harvest, and the Giver of Rest. While this kind of interpretation is not always safe, who will say the original meanings of these names have no significance in this beautiful story?

The one next kin was unable to redeem, as man involved with man in sin was unable to redeem man. Boaz was a kinsman and thus had a right, and being of a higher branch and not involved in the disaster, had the power to redeem. The God-man, the near kinsman of the high family of Heaven, " Behold, behold the bridegroom for he arrives "! The story of Ruth closes with a genealogy that marks the main purpose of the Book.

Boaz was of royal lineage. His grandfather, Nashon, was prince and standard bearer of the royal tribe. His father, Salmon, was at the siege of Jericho and married Rahab, who saved the two spies and her own house by means of the scarlet thread. The son Boaz married Ruth, and from this union Obed came, and Obed's son was Jesse, the father of David, from which house Jesus Christ was born. In this line we see the blood of the Canaanite and Moabite prefiguring the call of the Gentiles.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOKS

The government through the wilderness had been a theocracy with Moses as a spokesman of God. When the tribes were separated, each occupying his own inheritance, they became interested in their own affairs and " every man did that which was right in his own eyes." God had said, " drive them out," but after a long struggle on the part of some or a skirmish on the part of others they had settled down to lives of ease to dwell among them, marry them and often to worship their gods. This resulted in the " Dark Ages " of Israel, in which for nearly four hundred years, tabernacle, priesthood and sacrifice were neglected. A strong centralized government would have saved them from anarchy, but there are even greater evils than this.

God's purpose was that they should accept Him for their King, and when they clamoured for a king, He said: " They have rejected me." Out of forty kings the people chose in after years, only three or four of them were true to God. The centralized government with a rotten heart sends impure blood to every member of the body politic. Through it all God was faithful, righteous, and merciful. He sold them to their enemies and used on them often, sharp discipline, but ever for their good. "In those days there was no King in Israel," but far better, the "angel of the Lord" came to give orders from God's throne. Israel was not wholly bad, however, in these times. The Book has little order except epochs, and incidents extraordinary are recorded, and long stretches of time are passed with the words: "And the land had rest forty years."

The road to popular liberty is beset with many difficulties. God's eye was ever upon their ship of state, and while it plunged in the storm it plunged toward the goal. The time has come for this twilight nation to have its first lessons of self-help. Hitherto it has been the rod of Moses and the spear of Joshua. Henceforth it must be: "The sword of the Lord and Gideon." The times are rude; the material raw; a nation it is in the making. The twenty-one little Mosaic records from many sources are put together to complete an effective proof and fulfillment of God's promises of blessing on the people if righteous, and judgments on them, if evil. From out this gloom there rings the clear, sweet voice of Ruth: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

The mention of the Moabites' strain of blood in the veins of the greatest Jewish king, and the use of "Ruth" as the name of the Book, shows its main idea; namely, that the power of love will conquer national prejudices. Ruth has more right to membership in the Kingdom of the true Israel than the great body of her natural children. Its great thought, lightly veiled in an exquisite story of charming style and historic value, gives Ruth high rank in Old Testament literature.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOKS

Deborah, the Joan of Arc of the Hebrew nation, shows what a determined woman can do. With high courage and unconquerable zeal, she fired her followers as did the Maid of Orleans and overcame obstacles that seemed insurmountable. Oh, that the womanhood of our nation, fair queen of the home, would marshal the powers of God against the enemies of the home! Religion is the heart that sends red blood through the moral life of the nation, and when it fails, society falls to pieces.

The irresistible power of a united and spirit-filled church, regardless of its smallness of property, is seen in the story of Gideon. In Abimelech we see the merciless cruelty of ambition. Jephthah, an illegitimate outcast, so signalized himself for courage that recalled by his brethren he delivered them from the Amorites and became a judge in Israel. Does that make you ashamed of the excuses you give for making a failure of your life?

Forty-two thousand Ephraimites were slain because they failed to pronounce the " h " in the word Shibboleth. Do you vote to stone a man to death with harsh judgments because he fails to tithe his mint and cummin as you do?

Like some college boys I have known, Samson was a great physical success and a great intellectual failure. He belonged to the tribe of the strong, weak men that have not yet all died. He never " took his spirits down to get his spirits up," for though he was a perpetual Nazarite his jollity was perennial. Jephthah and Samson are not patterns for us; but they served their times well though the former was filled with superstition and the latter with sensualism. " In these times of ignorance God winked at," " It is daybreak everywhere " and " God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Let us not be found attempting to palliate the faults of these old worthies else we may wrest the Scriptures to our own hurt.

This Book shows how " the weak things of this world confound the mighty." Three hundred Gideonites, left-handed Benjamites, Shamgar's oxgoad, a woman with a nail, a barley cake, a pitcher, a trumpet, a piece of millstone and a jawbone, each in the hand of Jehovah, was fraught with death for the enemies of Israel.

Elimelech's family is a home where "God is King" and "The Lord is sweet"; a home filled with (Mahlon) "song" and (Chilion) "perfection." Leaving the land of promise for the land of darkness, they proved the truth of the text: "The way of the transgressor is hard." In Naomi's backslidden state the "King" is dead; the song is hushed; perfection is no more; and the "sweet" changes to "bitter." Oh, backslidden in heart, turn your face to the "House of Bread" and the "Lord of the Harvest."

VIII

FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

THE KEY TO THE BOOKS

THESE two Books formed one in the Hebrew, and in the old English versions, including the two following them, were named the "Four Books of the Kings" (Kingdom's Septua). Kingdom is the ruling thought with practically all the events of the Book relating to it. Good old Eli, doing his religious service as priest at Shiloh, is first on the scene, but the radius of his influence is small, anarchy reigns, and "every man does that which is right in his own eyes."

Samuel, born of deeply religious parents, and brought up amidst the hallowed influence of the temple service, and energized by the "spirit of the Lord," laid plans for the unifying of the nation. In the main, we may say, the Books cover the records of three administrations. Of Samuel, the prophet-judge, the last of the judges and in a real sense the first of the prophets; of Saul, the anti-theocratic King, one of the saddest, most tragic lives ever written; and of David, the ruler in a theocratic monarchy.

Moses established a theocracy in which Samuel was the ideal exponent and leader. Samuel established a theocratic monarchy in which David was a man after God's own heart. The people knew not how to voice the nation's needs. A unifying power they did need but not a king. It was only when Samuel was too old for active service, and the duties of judgeship fell on his unworthy sons, that the clamour arose for a king.

God's wise economy is to give men that only which they are ready to receive. Moses prematurely killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand, and returned to Egypt where forty years of grinding under the heel of despotism had prepared the children of Israel for deliverance.

"Make us a king to judge us like all the nations," was the plea they made to the sad-hearted old reformer. It was in this instance that Saul made his stupendous failure. "Like the kings of the nations" he tarried not for the prophets of God at Gilgal but exercised the priestly function himself. "The king's business requires haste," but not at the expense of obedience. Like the kings of other nations, he destroyed not utterly but brought back the spoil and, like them, saddest of all, he turned his back upon God to listen to the crooning of a witch.

The high crime of Saul was his attempt at the dethronement of Jehovah, whose purpose was ever to be the King of Israel. In these three tragic epochs of Saul's decline, the first shows his substitution of the ceremonial for the moral and the spiritual; the second, the exercise of his own will for God's command, and the third, a witch for God.

Let us now turn from this death march of Saul to David the son of Jesse, the new hope and God's will for Israel. When Saul was rebuked he said, "I have sinned"; David said, "I have sinned against the Lord"; Saul said, "Yet honour me before the elders"; David said, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." David was "a man after God's own heart," not because he was so human as to sin, but because he was so manly as to confess and repent of it. He left a kingdom stretching from Egypt to Lebanon, from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOKS

In David's kingdom we have the full extent of the promise to Abraham, a fit type of the Kingdom of Christ that is the fulfillment of Jehovah's promise to the yearning heart of humanity. God's aim for Israel was the ushering in of an eternal Kingdom. "I will stablish the throne of his kingdom forever," was His promise to Nathan. Isaiah sees the Prince of Peace upon the throne of David.

It is at least interesting (if not significant) to note the point of similarity between the life of Samuel and that of Christ. Samuel means "asked of God," and Christ was the unvoiced cry of humanity. Their mothers, Hannah and Mary, each sang magnificats. They were both dedicated to the house of the Lord that they might there abide forever (1 Sam. 1:22).

Samuel was prophet, priest and king, as was Christ; and like Christ he never sat upon an earthly throne, and was "priest after the order of Melchizedek." Both were blameless in their lives, and, while Samuel judged the living Israel, Christ is judge of the quick and the dead, the Israel triumphant.

David is an undoubted type of Christ, and is so used frequently in the New Testament. Christ and David are of the same tribe, Judah, and our Lord was often addressed as "Thou son of David." Each was three times anointed and set apart for kingly service, and each established a Kingdom. The absolute term "forever" identified their thrones, and distinguished these kingdoms from all others. David was a worthy type of the Merciful One. Note his grace toward Saul, Absalom and Mephibosheth. At the threshing floor of Araunah he, contrary to the customs of that time, spared the innocent sheep. This act of mercy was an appropriate dedication of the place where the ark was to rest, the temple to be builded and ceremonial atonement made for the sins of the people. In this Book, the word "Messiah" is used for the first time: "He shall exalt the horn of his anointed" (his Messiah) (1 Sam. 2:10).

The account of the idols' falling before the ark in the temple of Dagon reminds us of the tradition that when Christ was taken to Egypt all idols fell. We know what happens when Christ enters the heart or a pagan land.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOKS

The time covered by these Books is about one hundred and twenty-five years. In this comparatively short period the political and religious progress of the nation has been great indeed. In the study of the Book of Judges we saw the lawless and backslidden condition of the people. The opening epoch is sad in the extreme. Eli's sons are vile, the ark of God is in the hands of the enemy, Eli dies of a broken heart, and sacred Shiloh, consecrated for religious worship in the days of Joshua, is now burned to the earth.

No wonder there was no open vision. The Israelites' compromise with the uncircumcised, their utter lack of confederation, and their love of ease, had enslaved them in the midst of their own inheritance! Their condition is pitiable. No smith was allowed to ply his trade "throughout all the land of Israel"; with the result that "neither sword nor spear is found in the hand of any of the people." The two swords, however, "with Saul and Jonathan," empowered by the "Lord of hosts," as was the oxgoad of Shamgar and the sling of David, were sufficient to raze to the ground the garrisons of the Philistines and to fulfill the promise of Hannah that "though by strength shall no man prevail, the adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces" (1 Sam. 2:9). This song of Hannah was like the breaking forth of a spring in a desert, and ere the "lamp went out in the temple of the Lord," little Samuel, just before the break of day, found the secret source of Israel's power, and prophesied the dawn of a new day for the nation.

While, as we have observed, the work of Moses and Samuel in some respects is similar, in others there is a vast difference. The religion of the desert was a religion of externals, "from without, in" being the method of its operations. This new kingdom is to be "from within out." Saul would, perhaps, have been a success in the days of Samson and Jephthah. "Is Saul also among the prophets?" No; he is still among the judges. "The spirit of the Lord," the propelling power for the ushering in of the new kingdom, was rejected by Saul, and the Lord rejected him from ruling over Israel.

Henceforth a king may be a priest, he must be a prophet. The author writes under the inspiration of the future development. Historical proportions are disregarded, and the account of the battle of Gilboa is dismissed with a few verses, while many chapters are used to describe the relations between Saul and Samuel.

The King of the Jews is beginning to fulfill the law and the prophets. "Behold," cried Samuel to disobedient, ceremonial Saul, "behold to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams." Such an utterance in the wilderness would have meant confusion. There is seen here evidence of that long conflict between priest and prophet, and the unmistakable marks of two or more hands in the writing of these Books. How else explain the two independent accounts of Saul's rejection (1 Sam. 13, 15), or the two introductions of David to Saul (1 Sam. 16, 17), or the two accounts of the slaying of the giant as found in chapters seventeen, 1 Samuel, and 2 Samuel 21: 19?

The prophet henceforth, above soldier and king and priest, is to be the pillar of fire for the nation. "The sons of the prophets" with their weird music of "tabret and a pipe and a harp," dancing and prophesying from the high place stood condemned later as a fanatic band (Amos 7: 14). Their appeal to the ecstatic emotions so deeply touched the superstitious Saul that he was numbered for a time among them. The guild, however, marks a step forward from the darkness of the judges to the gloom of Samuel. Representing, as they did, the love and worship of Jehovah and an effectual agency for the intensifying of patriotism, it marks an epoch of progress in a rude age. The ideals of this guild did not hold Saul for long, however. They were too far beyond him and his age, and he soon abandoned the real religion of Jehovah for politics and superstition.

While the kingdom was the dominant thought of the times in the minds of the people, "internal improvement" and "manifest destiny" were the chief policies in the purpose of God. The Kingdom of God is not "lo, there" as the people imagined, nor "lo, here" as Saul thought, nor "meat and bread" as Solomon afterward believed, but within, as Christ insists; and only through the reign of righteousness in the inner life will the glorious prophecies be fulfilled that "the Kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ." The Kingdom is prepared for you, but you can never inherit it until you are prepared for the Kingdom. Ebenezer marks an epoch in the purpose of the race, and while in the constant changing fortunes of the ark back and forth, there seems confusion without a guiding hand, God is standing in the shadows "keeping watch above his own." In the ebb and flow, each ebb is less and each flow is greater. Deborah was right; "The stars in their course fought against Sisera"; but the swords of Joshua and Deborah have been succeeded by Samuel's school of the prophets. That which is seen is temporal, and God's aim is the establishment of an eternal Kingdom.

Then in this Book of Samuel is the first direct reference to immortality. At the death of Bathsheba's babe, David breaks his fast and is comforted, for he says: "He shall not come to me but I shall go to him." Some doubt this reference, but the man who wrote: "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever," and "at his right hand are pleasures forevermore," etc., had the inspiration of David's greater Son, who said: "In my Father's house are many mansions."

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOKS

The lessons of the Book are many and varied. In Eli's case we see the sad consequence of lax family government, and in the home of Elkanah and Hannah the rich reward of training up a child in the way it should go.

Magnanimity more beautiful than Saul's throne is shown by David in his attitude toward Saul and his family. Saul was full of promise and hopes for Israel, but how soon were they all blasted! The sons of Eli and the sons of Samuel, what possibilities for good were theirs! Having the authority of judge, priest and prophet, and standing at the crisis of a people's life, they might have flooded their nation with a new light of righteousness.

Cruel jealousy drives Saul to such madness that he tries to murder his best friends, even his own valiant son; and he dies at last a miserable suicide. The same demon of jealousy causes a murder in the case of Abner by Joab. Perhaps the most beautiful picture of friendship in this world is found in the devotion of Jonathan to David. As Mr. Moody said: " Saul took David to his home, but Jonathan took him to his heart."

David's ruling that " the part that goeth down to battle and the part that tarrieth by the stuff shall part alike," is just. Your wife gets no vote at the ballot box and slight invitation to the battle of business, but she tarries by the stuff and ought to share alike with you your riches and your honours.

The prosperity of Obededom when the ark rested in his home was to be expected; but why did it bring distress to the Philistines who captured it? The form without the power has ever brought spiritual death. Like the Gospel, it is the " savour of death unto death."

" Be sure your sins will find you out " is heard in the bleating of the sheep. " As you sow so shall you reap " has an example in David's marrying the heathen woman whose child is Absalom. In the sin with Bathsheba what a harvest! Loss of faithful Uriah by murder, death of his child, dishonour in his own home, murder of one son by another, and Absalom's sin against his father's wives on the same roof where David sinned. " With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." The long fierce anguish of his soul is heard in the sobbing penitence of the fifty-first Psalm, which has voiced the heart of repentance through every succeeding generation.

IX

THE KINGS

THE KEY TO THE BOOKS

THE superscription of this Book is true to its fundamental thought and "the king" is the key. While the author is not certainly known, and the text is said to be in a "worse condition than that of any other Scripture," its credibility is upheld by the prophets, by its frequent quotation in the New Testament, by heathen history and by modern excavations of cuneiform monuments. The dominant thought of the Book is "the king."

In the opening epoch of David's rule, theocratic monarchy reached its height. Pompous ceremony had little influence over him at the first, but ere long the flunkyism of the Eastern courts began to change the simple-hearted warrior into the autocrat, and, when near the end, his favourite queen enters his sick chamber, she prostrates herself crying, "My lord, O king!" and "King David, live forever," etc.

With this change came the harem and all its attendant evils of enervating luxury, degraded women, vile eunuchs and dark intrigues. The theocratic king has become an Oriental despot. The purpose indeed in "numbering the people" was that each head might be taxed for the maintenance of the magnificence of the king and his court. The people may well now call to mind the words of Samuel who warned them that their sons would be taken to run before the king's chariot and their daughters for his perfumers; that their vineyards would be seized for his courtiers and their whole possessions put under tribute for the splendour of an oriental despot.

The heart of David had not yet ceased to beat when Solomon the Magnificent was ushered in. The people, at last, get a king "like all the nations"; and disobeying God's law "he multiplied houses, wives, and gold, and soon felt himself lifted above his brethren" (Deut.

17:20). He has "forty thousand stalls of horses," "seven hundred wives," and "gold, gold, gold until it was nothing accounted of." A palace of ivory, magnificent houses for idolatrous wives, great levies of men, and burdensome taxes,—these all mean the swift verging of the government toward despotism. Land and sea and air are put under tribute—yea, the very lives of the people for the glory of "the king."

If David has no power to curb the ambitions of Joab and avenge the insults of Shimei, "the king" now speaks the death sentence, and his minions do the rest. If David stood trembling and repenting before the prophets of God, "the king" deposes Abiathar and utterly ignores Nathan and God who had been the faithful counselors of his father.

The king with his monumental self-conceit thought himself the central sun around which all things revolved. It is not strange that the Urim and Thummin were forgotten, that the priests were never consulted and the voice of the prophet was stilled. The royal overshadows the sacerdotal, and Solomon the King becomes the supreme head of the Church. Priestly and even prophetic functions must not stand in the way of his autocracy. It was the king, and not the priests or the prophet, who made the prayer of dedication and offered burnt offerings upon the altar. For this crime Uzziah was slain of the Lord. The Temple of God has become the chapel of the king. Henceforth for two hundred and fifty years, to the fall of the kingdom, there is a life and death struggle between the throne and the prophets. "And they departed not from the commandments of the king to the priests and Levites concerning any matter" (2 Chron. 8:15).

The whole narrative is written from a religious standpoint. It is shown that the king, who is evil in the sight of the Lord and "departs not from the sin of Jeroboam," will at last suffer the penalty of God's judgment. The king who doeth "right in the eyes of the Lord as did

David his father," will have the pledge of Jehovah for the establishment of his throne. The rotten heart of a despotic and centralized government sends impure blood through the corporate life of the nation.

Righteousness is not of the earth, it must come from above; and when the priests and prophets are silenced, Jehovah's agents are cut off and the Kingdom of heaven is closed in the face of the nation. "Joash did right all his days, because Jehoiada the priest instructed him." The writer's religious standpoint accounts for the slight notice taken of great political personages like Omri and Jeroboam II, while Solomon, the temple builder, and Jeroboam, who caused Israel to sin, and Ahab, who introduced Phœnician worship, are given comparatively so much space.

One of the greatest national epochs of the period was the division of the kingdom. The son of Solomon, Rehoboam, "answered the people roughly, and said, My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." The people rebelled, and the outcome was a new kingdom, formed of ten of the tribes ruled over by Jeroboam, under the name of Israel, otherwise known as Samaria.

The kings of Israel and Judah, as given by Kittel, are as follows:

ISRAEL

Ahaziah	855–854
Jehoram	854–842
Jehu	842–814
Jehoahaz	814–797
Joash	797–781
Jeroboam II	781–740
Zachariah	740
Shallum	740
Menahem	740–737
Pekahiah	737–735
Pekah	735–734
Hoshea	734–725

JUDAH

Jehoshaphat	851–843
Ahaziah	843–842
Athaliah	842–836
Joash	836–796
Amaziah	796–783
Amaziah-Uzziah	783–737
Jotham	737–735
Ahaz	735–715
Hezekiah	715–686
Manasseh	686–641
Amon	641–639
Josiah	639–608
Jehoahaz	608
Jehoakim	608–597
Jehoachin	597
Zedekiah	597–586

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOKS

The building of the Temple marks a great era in the history of the Messianic prophecy. Is this wide extending kingdom, this glorious Temple, this magnificent king, the fulfillment of the yearning hope of Israel's heart? This hope undefined and heaven born, was ever the same in essence through the ages past, clothing itself in many forms.

How appropriate that in the book of origins it was a "seed." Since that day He has been to Israel a priest, prophet, judge, warrior, and, as in Solomon, a king and preëminently Prince of Peace, and builder of the house of God. Never were national hopes raised to higher heights, only, as it seems, to be dashed to lowest depths. Into these wrecks of hopes come the prophets of God speaking new life to dead hearts, and transfiguring the national dream for a kingdom of earthly glory with a vision of an inheritance incorruptible, a Kingdom spiritual and eternal.

The long night of prophetic silence has been broken at last by the mighty Elijah who takes his stand on the water-shed of Hebrew history and over Israel's earthly glory, raises his voice like the trump of doom. On one side of this Alpine prophet are the portentous shadows of Sinai; on the other, the mellow rays of Calvary. In the transfiguration were Moses, Christ and Elias. Never did a jewel have a more beautiful and appropriate setting. Christ is come as the fulfillment of the law and the prophet, and stands between them to receive from their hands keys of God to the triple office of prophet, priest and King.

After the wind and the earthquake and the fire, there came "the still small voice." In other words, after Elijah came Elisha, or after the law came the Gospel, and after John the Baptist, Jesus the Christ. Elijah means "God is Jehovah," and Elisha means "God is Salvation." He is dull indeed who cannot see in these names an unfolding of progressive revelation.

It is remarkable that while the Northern kingdom had nineteen dynasties and was finally taken away never to return, Judah though often invaded by overwhelming armies of heathen nations, and suffered the sacking of her beloved Jerusalem by Egypt, and was even carried away in exile by Babylon, yet had only one dynasty; and that the thread of national life remained unbroken. Follow this scarlet line of blood inheritance from David to Mary's Son and you see how Jehovah's promise holds true, "And I will stablish the throne of his kingdom forever."

Amidst the ruins of a worldly and unholy kingdom, Isaiah sees a rift in the lowering clouds and on the throne of power, "The Holy One of Israel" (2 Kings 19:22). Jerusalem is besieged and Ahaz is caged like a bird. Isaiah leading his child Shearjashub (A remnant shall return) meets the king face to face. The prophet gave the king permission to ask a sign of Jehovah. When Ahaz said, "I will not ask," Isaiah uttered the words that mark a new epoch in Old Testament history, the birth throes indeed of Messianic prophecy. The very name Isaiah (Salvation of Jehovah) is a rebuke to Ahaz. Why seek the help of Egypt or Assyria or the wisdom of a wizard? Seek God. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign," "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel." He saw the earthly Israel perish in the approach from the line of David of a "Mighty Deliverer" and "Prince of Peace."

Isaiah utters the first clear note of the final form and spiritual conception of Messianic prophecy realized at last in David's great Son. The earthly temple and palace may become a pile of rubbish and a "joy of wild asses and a pasture of flocks," in a mysterious and divine sense, every man will become a "temple of the Holy Ghost" and look away from the dark earth to "a palace not made with hands."

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOKS

The date of these Books is sometime after 542 B. C., and though we have covered four hundred and twenty-five years it appears from a human viewpoint that little or no real progress is made. But let us consider for a moment. If God had never reached the goal of His purpose, Jesus Christ would not have been born in the fullness of time.

The war is long and many a single battle is lost, but defeat will come at last to the enemies of Israel's God. The ship plunges in the storm but it plunges toward the shore. Humanity advances over the ruins of unworthy peoples, over out-of-date and inadequate institutions. Let nobody be disturbed when God's hammers are heard taking down useless scaffolding. With true vision we recognize "a stream of tendency not ourselves which makes for righteousness."

It is only with such vision that we read history aright. What a succession of thrilling scenes we have here! The decrepit David is dying in his chamber, and dark intriguers are flitting back and forth. We see the blaze of Solomon's throne and the broadening expanse of his peaceful kingdom, and hear the shouts of deliverance turn to disgusting vanities, and, like apples of Sodom, crumble to ashes in the mouth. We shudder at the scene of Ahaz sacrificing his child on the red-hot irons of an idol in the valley of Hinnom, and are startled by the sudden appearance of hair-mantled Elijah at the gate of Jezreel. We hear the wild blasts of the bugle and turn to see the furious Jehu riding to the doom of Ahab's house. We see the "chosen people of Jehovah" insane with hunger, and eating their own babes in the horrible siege of the Holy City. Our hearts are made sad by their weeping as they go out to a strange land and hang their harps of song by the Babylon river. Above the din of discord we hear the strange, sweet notes of the prophets, and in the gray east see the rise of the Day Star to shed its light into the dark heart of humanity.

The extravagance and tyranny of Solomon, the folly of Rehoboam and the sin of "Jeroboam who made Israel to sin"—these make a very poor outlook, but let us not forget the uplook. In the disruption, when ten of the tribes withdrew and but two poor and insignificant tribes remained, and all seemed lost, our author, with the vision of the true seer, declares it to be "of the Lord." When the walls of smug provincialism crumble, and Israel's Kingdom for the Jew is succeeded by Israel's religion for the world, we fully appreciate these words of faith in Him who stands within the shadow "keeping watch above his own."

Ahab's marriage of Jezebel turns loose from northern Phœnicia the darkest flood of idolatry and obscene worship that ever cursed the Hebrew people, and Atheliah the daughter, marrying a prince of the Southern kingdom, extends the black pall over the Holy City. In all this we find the sure prophecy of death. But as the swan dying sings its sweetest song, so in the midst of the dying monarchy there is heard the song of the prophet.

Elijah, full grown and unannounced, suddenly appears as the first of a long line of prophets. On Mount Carmel he stands on the height of tragic grandeur and, as the vicegerent of God, slays the four hundred false prophets. Jehu, under the order of God, slew the wicked house of Omri. Heroic treatment this for a desperate disease. Dark and cruel times are they, but we are on the eve of more merciful days, and this prophet is about to catch a wider vision of Jehovah's merciful intention toward the non-Christian world. When he went to the widow of Zarephath, he thought only of the great Jehovah who protects and shelters from the bloody sword of his enemies; but as Christ plainly shows there was in it all a purpose of conversion. He says: "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, but unto none of them was Elias sent save unto Serepta."

The "still, small voice" and the coming of the more merciful Elisha, prophesy the day so near at hand when a whole family will not be slain for the sin of one of its members. If the Deuteronomy law (24:6) was known, it had never been heeded. When Amaziah came to the throne, however, he did not destroy whole families but only the head conspirators. A new thought of individual responsibility is beginning to dawn.

The prophets, ever true to the call of God, blazed the way of progress, and shot the white light of heavenly truth into the dark reigns of every king from the Disruption to Zedekiah. The priests of this period not only acquiesced in the almost unbroken line of wicked rule, but joined the king and the mob against the "man that is mad and that maketh himself a prophet." The priests are stirred to revengeful anger by the prophets who so earnestly protest against the substitution of religious observances for mercy toward men and faith in God. Hosea touched a high note in that splendid outburst quoted by our Lord: "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice." This great searchlight of truth is further enriched by Micah, Jeremiah, and Isaiah, and darkened by the long line of ceremonial priests from Aaron and his golden calf to Ananias.

Each prophet makes his contribution to the advancing light of truth. Hosea insists on the "knowledge of God," and Amos on justice of the strong for the weak. Isaiah sings a glad song of Messianic Salvation, and Jeremiah moans his warning to his beloved Judah, and ushers in the truth of individual responsibility. While Zephaniah sees the breaking up of the nation he proclaims the returning of "the remnant" and the establishment of the Church.

Nahum hurls anathemas at the head of Nineveh and prophesies God's protection of His people. Habakkuk urges faithfulness toward God, and Ezekiel, with a magnificent eloquence, proclaims His glory. These men taught that God is above bribe by rams and rivers of oil, that human sacrifices are abhorrent to Him, asceticism is heathenish, and that self-denial has virtue only when prompted by a pure motive. Licentiousness under the forms of religion is an abomination with Jehovah. As Micah says: "What doth God require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Joel, Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk and Jeremiah were prophets of Judah. The three first saved the nation from Assyria, but the last three failed to save it from captivity by Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar. Like the Virgin Mary who hugs the Babe to her heart and flees to Egypt and thus saves the world's hope from the bloody sword of Herod, so Jehovah with Judah, the child of His benign purpose, in His arms flees to Babylon and thus saves the precious remnant. As the prophet plainly shows, the remnants are not saved for the building of a nation, but that they might become charter members in His Church.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOKS

One general lesson that we get from this brief recount of the enthronement and dethronement of these thirty-nine kings, is that obedience to God's law makes for the permanence of earthly thrones. Jerusalem's puny fortress is despised by the other kingdoms of earthly glory; but with Zion's full reliance on God the mighty hosts of Sennacherib are scattered like autumn leaves. The Holy City loses sight of God and succumbs to the Nebuchadnezzar whom Jehovah could have humbled to the level of the ox that eateth grass. The Book powerfully teaches that wealth and fame and power count for little in the scales of God's rewards; that everything depends on whether a man does good or evil in the sight of God.

"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). Sin is weakness and, in the end, death. Uncleanness means decay and purity means power. Faith will triumph, and the people with an inwrought moral fibre are indomitable, while the nation gilded and beautiful with the gewgaws of sin will crumble in the first onset. "That which is seen is temporal, but that which is not seen is eternal"; for the "Kingdom of God cometh without observation." Solomon cannot please God with a river of blood from a hecatomb of beeves, nor can Jehoiakim quiet conscience by cutting to pieces the roll of the law. Truth cannot be cut to pieces with a penknife.

One soweth and another reapeth. Some great souls are like the foundation of a lighthouse, hidden deep down under the sea, giving support to the searchlight that guides the ships through the seas. David did a hard and slavish work in getting material for God's house; and Solomon sat in a blaze of glory on the ivory throne. David's life, like an April day, is part clouds and part sunshine. He sinned grievously and repented sincerely. His life is not an example for us; for those "times of ignorance God winked at." He prayed prayers of imprecation and took vengeance on his enemies; but "I say unto you, Love your enemies." He had the faults of human nature that make him kin to us all; but his courage to face his black record, his manly struggle against temptation, and above all, his sensitive conscience and noble confessions elicit the love of all men.

A great heart like David will succeed when a great brain like Solomon will fail. The reign of Solomon is a stupendous and magnificent failure. His showy commerce enriched the king and impoverished the people and died with the king. Worst of all, it broke God's plain laws of Exodus and destroyed the moral sense of Israel. In blazing letters is the lesson of this life. Happiness is found rather in truth and righteousness than in the wealth and power and pleasures of this world. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" when things "under the sun" are considered. It is only in things above the sun that we shall find permanent satisfaction: "Hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments."

What a contrast between the opening and closing scenes of this Book. I wonder what the Queen of Sheba would have said if she could have seen the sad remnant leaving the wrecked throne and the dishonoured temple? "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

"Jeroboam who caused Israel to sin" was not really an idolator but a man who, for the sake of worldly policy, pandered to materialism and outward ceremony to the discredit of the truly spiritual in religious life. He had, after the Disruption, no sacred place in Israel like Jerusalem, and his fears were that if his people went there for their worship, his kingdom would become disorganized. He believed the ends justified the means, and that good can come out of evil.

He, therefore, made golden calves for worship of Jehovah in his own kingdom. His politics is to him more important than his religion. His tribe has not all died. There are men who are religious when they lose no votes by it, and who are willing to sell religious principles to enthrone their selfish and earthly policy. Their first consideration is to realize their own ambitions, and this must be done though the heavens fall. They do not want the heavens to fall; but instead of mounting to heaven-high aims, they strive to drag them down to a level with their own. They prop the heavens with a makeshift altar, and "steal the livery of heaven to serve the devil in."

There was great danger that the outward glory and dazzling brightness of the new Temple should blind the people to the real spiritual nature of God's Kingdom. It was well that Solomon knelt before the people and with open palms toward heaven and in this humble and receptive manner proclaimed that "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, nor is he worshipped with men's hands as though he needed anything."

It was called the "Tabernacle of Meeting" to signify the meeting of God with them as He met Moses and the children of Israel; and "the Tabernacle of Testimony" to show how the two tables of stone bear witness to the unbroken covenant between God and man. It stands as a testimony that God's will is found expressed not in the ceremonial, but in the moral law, and that in His infinite condescension He deigns to dwell with His people.

In the life of this remarkable character the lessons are rich and many. Jezebel, the power behind the throne, had hushed the voice of the prophets, and it appeared to Elijah that he was the only one left. When time-serving preachers fail to cry aloud and spare not, wickedness runs riot in the town; and while there may be "seven thousand" who are still true to the truth it will take the Almighty to find them. It is a great deal easier to compromise with the world, the flesh, the devil, wear soft raiment, and live in kings' palaces, than to face alone the wicked world and live in caves of the social outcast, and feel the keen cuts of the sword of ribald criticism.

To court persecution is rash, but to desert in a battle for real truth is cowardice. On Mount Carmel, Elijah never wavers, but when no longer moral principle is involved he flees from the angry threats of a woman. Compare the flight of Jonah "from the presence of the Lord," and that of Elijah from the presence of Jezebel. Satan tempts in hours of physical exhaustion. We are spirits but we have bodies. By feeling we ofttimes lie under juniper trees, by faith we gird the loins of tired bodies. Let us remember then that forced inactivity, loneliness, apparent failure, and bodily exhaustion are all opportunities for the tempting of souls, but that sleep and food and heaven-directed journeys are important steps in God's program for the salvation of men. Elijah thought himself necessary, but the order came for the anointing of Elisha in his stead. If the "pillar" of your church dies or moves away from your community, just remember there is no necessary man. He had resignedly tarried by the brook, courageously shown himself to Ahab, and with mighty faith touched the secret springs that shot fire from God's altar to devour the sacrifice on Mount Carmel. But Elijah is not necessary.

Men like Ahab will hush the imperative demands of God with excuses of worldly prudence, and take Benhadad into their chariots and compromise the honour of Church and country. That "every man has his price," as Satan charges in Job's case, is false. Men like Micaiah had rather live on bread and water in a dungeon than, like Zedekiah, sell themselves and traduce the truth and sit at Ahab's table as honoured guests.

Ahab, who "sold himself to work wickedness," got naught for the bargain. It was so with Achan who dropped the garments and gold with shame, and with Judas, who, in an agony of stricken remorse, threw the silver on the Temple floor. "Money is the root of all kinds of evil." In the case of Naboth's vineyard, we see discontent, covetousness, envy, jealousy, idolatry, bribery, murder, and hypocrisy. Sackcloth and ashes will not drive demons from a haunted breast. Judgment often goes lame, but reaches at last the end of its journey and falls like doom on the guilty.

Elisha did well in sprinkling salt on the bitter waters. He had received the "cloak of power," but he hardly expected to raise the dead to start with. "He did with his might what his hands (not his imagination) found to do." Naaman had two diseases, pride and leprosy, and Elisha could have used a pompous ceremony in curing the leprosy, but it would not have helped his pride. God's conditions of faith must be met if we are to claim His conclusions of Salvation. "Go wash" ever precedes "be clean." The incident is marred by the hypocrisy of Gehazi as with lying tongue and hands stained with Naaman's gold he answered Elisha, "I have been no whither."

X

CHRONICLES

THE KEY TO THE BOOKS

THESE two Books were originally one and were called "Words of Days." The Greek version calls it more appropriately: "Things Omitted." The Book of Kings recites the continuous history down to the exile of Judah, and at this crisis we must pause to review. No wonder the Hebrew version prefers that the story be unbroken and that Kings be followed with Ezra-Nehemiah, placing Chronicles at the close of the canon. Ezra seems to be the author and you see the touch of his priestly hand throughout the Books. Elsewhere we have dealt with Samuel, Kings, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Chronicles covers the same ground and copies wholly from above and other sources. To take up these Books is, therefore, like gleaning in a harvested field or reading a miniature Old Testament.

"The House of God," mentioned no fewer than thirty-five times, is the key-word; and this explains that while much is taken from the "Kings" everything is rejected that does not serve the main purpose of a recital of the restoration of the House of God, the preservation and purity of her ritual service, and the transcendant importance of all things priestly and levitical. This explains why the account of David's reign is a story of preparation of ordinances and material for "the House," and that great space, six chapters, is given to its building and dedication by Solomon and only three chapters to other matters pertaining to that reign. Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah find an honoured place in these records because they repaired the House of God. Divisions, courses, prayers, singers, porters, and all pertaining to the temple are emphasized. In this light it is clear why the story of the mighty prophet Elijah is omitted and the account of David's sin against Uriah, while David's sin of numbering the people and King Uzziah's sin of performing the offices of priest are given place.

David and Solomon had discharged priestly duties without rebuke, but under Jehoiada's reformation the priesthood had become sufficiently powerful to claim this as their exclusive right, and for the first time in the history of the monarchy this royal usurpation was resented as a sacrilege. Josephus declares, " a great earthquake rent the temple," but our priestly author tells us only of the leprosy that " rose up in his forehead " and how they thrust him out, because, " being unclean," he would profane the " House of God." The prosperity or downfall of the temple had long since become identified with the rise and fall of the Jewish people.

When their hope of spiritual and national life was centered in it, why should they not hold it in reverence? It was built as a signal fulfillment of prophecy, was a symbol of the dwelling place of God among them, and a type of the Jews and the Church through both of which the nations were to receive blessings to the end of time.

The Book of Chronicles has been regarded as of comparatively little value, but to the returning exiles it seemed a necessity. For the allotment of land, the proper maintenance of officials to their rightful place, etc., there must be just this authoritative source of information found in these tables. Hence, the genealogy of the promised line of inheritance is given from Adam to Judah's exile. In these modern times no attention is given to the original meaning of the names we give our children. Not so among the Hebrews. Names among them are a revelation of the character of the parents. Hence, to the people of that age, this long list of names was full of vital interest, especially from a priestly viewpoint. The Book appropriately closes with an account of how the Lord " stirred up the spirit of Cyrus," and charged him to "build him a house in Jerusalem"; and the rising of the Temple was like the rising of the Star of Bethlehem, pointing to the birth of a new hope in the hearts of the despondent exiles.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOKS

In the Books of the Kings, the exaltation of the king seems synonymous with the glory of the nation. In this Book the scene is shifted from the palace to the Temple. From the viewpoint of this author, if the king is to have the light of God's approval, he must stand in right relation to those prophetic types and walk in these priestly and sacrificial paths that lead to the Source of all light.

While this account of the reinstitution of ceremonial law may appear to us mechanical and devoid of life, in that far-away period, it meant reaction from idolatry and reform from that obscure Phœnician worship that left its muddy trail through both nations. Much space is given to good Hezekiah who makes a call to both Israel and Judah "that they should come to the house of the Lord to keep the passover, for they had not done it for a long time in such sort as it was written." Josiah is commended in strong terms, for "there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel to the prophet." The passover is, without doubt, the most striking type of the atonement. The lamb foretokens the Innocent who is to become a substitute for the guilty, its blood a sacrifice for sin, and, by proper application, the salvation of the sinner. The "shedding of blood" and the "bitter herbs" are a "memorial of His death and passion," and the eating of its flesh prophesies the living Church grown strong, and able by that "broken body" to turn away from sin and "passover" to the triumphant kingdom of the risen Christ.

In Abijah's speech to Jeroboam and Israel, we see why our writer at the Disruption ignored the Northern kingdom to record the history of Judah. Because "they [Judah] burn burnt sacrifices and sweet incense and show-bread they set in order . . . the candlesticks of gold," etc. In the stead of this ritual of the true God and the prophecy of the coming Messiah, Abijah charged: "There are with you the golden calves which Jeroboam made you for gods" (2 Chron. 13:8).

Away back in the land of Egypt, old Jacob called his sons together and pronounced on Judah this blessing: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come" (Gen. 49:10).

These genealogical tables show the fulfillment of that prophecy, and, while uninteresting to us, were highly important to those sons of Judah. "These tables give the sacred line through which the promise was transmitted for nearly thirty-five hundred years; itself a fact "unexampled in the history of the human race." Israel may have nearly as many dynasties as kings, Judah can have but one. The Northern kingdom may be carried away and the very name perish, and, through colonization, Samaria a mongrel nation, may occupy the territory desolated by lions, fire and sword.

Little Judah among its mountain fastnesses still abides under "the shadow of the Almighty." After an eighteen months' siege by Nebuchadnezzar, Jerusalem may fall unconquered, and though the army should return to destroy their beautiful Temple in which centered their dreams and hopes, and burn to the ground "Jerusalem the golden," and kill or carry away most of the nation, and leave the land desolate and empty; as God still lives Israel's fate shall not be Judah's. The Mighty Deliverer locks the doors of this empty house against all intruders, and awaits the return of the royal seed; for the scepter shall not depart from Judah till he comes to whom it belongs.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOKS

The Books of the Kings closed with a dark picture indeed. Israel and Judah are both in exile, and all their types, prophecies, and promises seem to have failed. We have little heart for a back trail to the very twilight of human history. The genealogies of Adam, Japheth, Shem, Ham, and Abraham are given. Then comes the royal line of David, and the tables of the tribes with special attention to the priestly line; and here we begin to discover the purpose of the Book. It is a rehearsal of Levitical history. Yet it is far more than this, it is the philosophy of history. The first Book gives the genealogical tables whose importance I have noticed. The second Book covers the same period with the Books of the Kings. This being the case we make no advance in time. Through all the vicissitudes of the past, and especially the stormy periods of the kings, the line of promise has remained unbroken. No wonder the returned exiles show such devotion to ceremonial law. I have said the account has a metallic ring, but the statement needs modification.

The House of God, our Key, is an advanced conception. "But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee: how much less the house which I have built" (2 Chron. 6:18).

Eloquent words these on the omnipresence of God; and with this lifting horizon the prophets of this period catch the vision of the world-wide kingdom. The temporal kingdom has fallen. God cannot lie, and these choice souls of that age and of the ages are forced to the verge of Israel's precipice. They must now look from an earthly to a heavenly kingdom. When the sun goes down the stars come out. To use the words of Solomon's prayer as quoted by Paul to Timothy: "When kings of earth failed" they turned to "the King eternal, immortal, invisible." A reform, like a pendulum, often swings too far to the other extreme. Then, too, their zeal must have been greatly heated by the finding of the book of the law by Josiah. But here is a sentiment from Hezekiah the great reformer, that would do credit to many of our modern ritualists: "Many of Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun have not cleansed themselves, but eaten the passover otherwise than it was written, but Hezekiah prayed for them saying, The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God; though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary" (2 Chron. 30: 18).

In all this is clearly marked the extension of God's revelation and the dawn of the day when, like the victory won by the songs of the Levites against Sennacherib (11:20), the triumph of the Christ shall come; not through swords of steel but through the "Sword of the Spirit"; not through the law but in the music of the Gospel, "through the righteousness of faith."

"The darkest hour is just before day," and God is pouring out His Spirit on His people. "Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God," stood near the throne and lost his life in his fidelity to God. Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, into whose written revelation we soon come with joy, are a few of those prophet-priests of God who draw back the rent veil while there pours into the dark world the shekinah-light of Truth.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOKS

As we read how calamity follows close on the heels of disobedience to the law of God and how prosperity comes as God is feared, we remember the Psalmist's pronouncement: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord," in contradistinction to those whose god is Baal, or drink, or money, or fashion, or fame.

For immediate advantage, men often mortgage the future. Asa formed an alliance with the king of Syria having subsidized him for the purpose of thwarting the intentions of Baasha to build a fortification at Ramah. Asa was successful in this, but a train of evil came from it as prophesied by Hanani. Another instance is the alliance of Jehoshaphat and Ahab. From this came the marriage of his son Jehoram, with "the daughter of Jezebel, that wicked woman," and the leading of that bride to Judah was the omen of dark days for the Southern kingdom.

In the gifts of the people for "the house of God" we learn some lessons of giving. "They with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasurer." The rich gave according to their wealth. "The people rejoiced," is a state of mind not often seen on such occasions. The reason is given, "for that they offered willingly." "Wherefore, David blessed the Lord" and not the people, as is often done.

In close touch with this is the story of Ornan offering his threshing floor, gratis, to David for an altar to the Lord. The answer is: "I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost" (1 Chron. 21:24). A sacrifice that has cost us nothing is not acceptable to God.

To kill the messenger of bad news does not alter the facts. To prove your pet theory of botany makes no changes among the flowers. To cast Hanani into prison, or to slay Zachariah, makes no change in the sinful conduct for which Asa and Joash were rebuked.

Asa, however, worked righteousness. His true fidelity to Israel's God was well tested when he deposed the queen dowager, his own mother, "because she made an idol in a grove." A rebuke, this, to rulers and those in authority guilty of nepotism.

In the application of the principle of heredity, we need to use much caution, as quaint Thomas Fuller shows us: "Rehoboam begat Abiam; that is, a bad father begat a bad son. Abiam begat Asa; that is, a bad father a good son. Asa begat Jehoshaphat; that is, a good father a good son. Jehoshaphat begat Joram; that is, a good father a bad son. My father's piety cannot be entailed; that is bad news for me. Impiety is not always hereditary; that is good news for my son."

XI

EZRA–NEHEMIAH

THE KEY TO THE BOOKS

THESE two Books are one, both in the Jewish canon and in the Septuagint with the name of "Ezra." Ezra was a priest and Nehemiah a governor, one complementing the other in the restoration of the Church and the State, and "restore" is the key. Here we have not only the origin but also the only Scripture account of Judaism. The Israelites were first called Hebrews but never Jews until after the Exile. Speaking broadly, the name Hebrew refers to his race, Israelite to his covenant relations and Jew to his religion.

It is not our intention here to enter into the interesting problems of history and literary criticism arising from these Books. One thing is sure, the remarkable fulfillment of prophecy found here greatly increases their credibility. "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (Isa. 44:28). "For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place" (Jer. 29:10). From the first captivity, B. C. 600, to the first return, 530, is this period of seventy years. There are some, however, who reckon from the destruction of the temple to its dedication, seventy years.

Of course the key-word is "restore" and we have the account of the restoration of the people, the Temple, the law, the religion, the walls, the word, the public preaching and prayer, the city, the feast and the Sabbath. "God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus," the decree

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was given, and Zerubbabel at the head of about fifty thousand persons begins a four months' journey of eight hundred miles, carrying five thousand sacred vessels of gold and silver taken from the first Temple, and armed with authority to "restore the house of the Lord at Jerusalem." "They that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death" remember now the words of Isaiah: "Ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace."

They found the city in ruins, where it had lain for over fifty years since its destruction under Nebuchadnezzar. The foundation of the Temple was laid amidst great rejoicing. The Samaritans, refusing the privilege of joining in the work, got revenge by delaying it for fourteen years. Into this gloom, bearing the torch of hope, there enter Haggai and Zechariah, whose messages of encouragement come like a direct visitation of God; and the Temple was completed twenty years after the foundation was laid.

After a span of over fifty years the next restorer appears. Ezra was a famous scribe and priest with an earnest soul, a determined will and deep humility. He grew up amidst the culture and literary activities of Babylon, and being a copyist, student and interpreter of the law, he was well equipped for the important part he was to play in the religious history of the race. It has been pretty well agreed that he introduced the Chaldee letter to supersede the old Hebrew, founded the great synagogue, collected the Books of the Bible, and was author and compiler of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah.

A coterie of Jews, including Mordecai, Esther, Nehemiah, and Ezra, at the court wielded great influence, and induced Artaxerxes to send out Ezra vested with authority to appoint magistrates and governors with a company of five thousand volunteers and about two million dollars in gold and silver. His righteous soul was much stirred by the piles of rubbish and mounds of broken wall surrounding the Temple, but more by the people who had fallen into indifferent religious formalism, and, ground down by poverty and oppression, were cowering in fear and despair. While he also repaired the Temple he saw that the greatest need was not material glory but religious awakening; and threw his earnest soul into the restoration of the law, the Sabbath, the feasts, and the purity of marriage resulting in the strictness of law observance never before felt in Jewish history.

The next restorer, Nehemiah, is one of the most lovable characters in the whole Bible. The office of "cup-bearer" implies that he was a statesman, and counselor of the king. In the midst of his ease, honours, and plenty, this great-hearted man was deeply touched by his brother Hanani's story of the "affliction and reproach" of Judah; and, under a large escort of the king and with appointment as governor, he began his journey about twelve years after that of Ezra. Under the conditions of that time, Jerusalem, so dear to every Jewish heart, could never prosper without a wall.

After a reconnoiter in the night about the ruins, he laid his plans before his council in such a masterly manner and devotional spirit as to claim the coöperation of all—even to those disaffected by the rigid reforms under Ezra. His organization of the men of sword and trowel and trumpet, his quick discovery of all plots, and his fearless mien under threatened attack, show him as master of the situation. His unification of all parties, his plans that each should "build against his own house," and his speed in the work, finishing in fifty-two days before the enthusiasm died or the enemy had time to thwart the work, show the wisdom of his policies. His call to account of those rich conscienceless men who had oppressed their poor brethren, and his liberality in spending his own means and refusing salary for his priceless services, show him as a great and noble soul.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOKS

The prophets, who may be of any tribe, Joshua of the priestly tribe of Levi, and Zerubbabel of the kingly tribe of Judah, have been called types of Christ in His threefold office of prophet, priest, and King. It is significant that this "prince of the house of David" redeems his people from bondage and, also, without a sword leads them as their "Prince of peace" and comes "with singing into Zion." Ezra-Nehemiah, bearing to each other such vital relationship, illustrate the double nature of Christ.

Ezra, the priest and preacher of righteousness, "saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth." "Henceforth there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised and the unclean" (Isa. 52:1). "Break forth into joy, sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem," for there cometh the great Nehemiah who is to be the redeemer and governor, for "He shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, and the government shall be upon his shoulder."

In such a Lord Protector, "where is the fury of the oppressor"? Why should ye be afraid of their revilings? for under the decree of the mighty king he will work and none can hinder. Nehemiah received his commission in the month Nisan, the anniversary of the first passover, and it seems that as Moses in the Egyptian, so Nehemiah in the Babylonian, bondage foreshadows "our Passover," in His office of "Leader and Commander of the people."

One of the clearest notes of the prophets concerning the Holy City and the royal tribe in Messianic times, was that the blood should remain untainted. It is not surprising, therefore, that Ezra, with the signal and sad example of Samaria before him, and jealous for the preservation of "the remnant," should with such zeal and boldness demand the purity of the house of David, that the seed of Israel separate themselves from all strangers. He has been severely criticized for his "pitiless legalism" and "merciless bigotry" by Geike and others, but here is a desperate case that needs heroic treatment. Don't blame the physician for the bitterness of his medicine, nor the surgeon for amputating the leg to save the life.

As Malachi says: "Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god." Certainly the "innocent will suffer." It is so in all forms of sin. Do we in mercy allow the wolf to remain in the sheepfold? Do we not compel the bigamist to leave his unlawful wife? It was for the same reason that material aid of rich Samaria was refused in the struggle of poverty by Judah to restore her temple.

In fact, was not this in the purpose of God when He carried them into captivity? It was a sifting process. As "two kingdoms, England and Holland, were sifted for seed corn with which to replant the New England states," so in the replanting of the land of promise, the Lord overruled, and Nebuchadnezzar took away such men as he wanted and dared not leave behind, but also such men as God wanted with which to replant Canaan.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOKS

These Books cover the period one hundred and four years from the return of the Exiles under Zerubbabel, B. C. 536, to the last visit of Nehemiah, B. C. 432. There seems to be no continuous history, but only epochs of most importance are recounted. There is, for instance, immediately preceding the times of Ezra, a long period of sixty years passed over with the words, "After these things." The key-word has much in common with our well-known meaning of "progress"—but a thought or two further. Hopes have been raised higher and visions have been made clearer than ever before by the prophets who, in turn, have been endued with a fuller measure of the Holy Spirit than had ever blessed God's people.

Here are unparalleled examples of sacrifice, generous giving, sincere worship, Sabbath observance, righteousness, obedience, and, what is at the bottom of all, Scripture study. The Word of God here reaches its highest exaltation.

The power of the sword had failed, but the power of the Book has triumphed! They have lost material possession, but in accord with God's ultimate purpose they cling to that " inheritance that fadeth not away." Where else in the Old Testament dispensation do we find such prayers of intensity, purpose, penitence, spiritual insight, and unconquerable faith? Weaned forever from idolatry, deeply penitent for past sins, and kindled with enthusiasm by the glowing messages of the prophets, there burst upon them visions of a splendid national and religious future.

There is, it is true, a commingling of temporal and spiritual hopes, but many tokens of a day of grace. Sad it is that the material element dominated the succeeding ages and turned the current of Jewish life into dead formalism. " Guard " is the word of the old dispensation, but " Spread " is to be the word of the new. It is therefore significant that four Gentile kings have been vitally interested in these deliverances. Worshipping God in Babylon, singing the songs of Zion by the Chebar river, the conception of the divinity of their religion was broadened and their convictions that Jehovah was God of all the earth became clearer. It is the dawning thought of a holy community that prefigures the Church Universal.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOKS

Nowhere else in the Bible is truth taught in more powerful exemplification. Righteousness is staged and played before our eyes.

In the part played by the heathen kings and in the protecting hand of God over His people against their enemies, and, above all, in the preservation of the remnant, we see how "all things work together for good to them that love the Lord."

This age needs a great revival of Sabbath observance and needs surely to be shamed by the intense eagerness with which the hungry people devoured the word. Think of the great multitudes that sat on the ground day after day sometimes for six hours at a stretch listening to the words of life pronounced by Ezra as he read the law from his improvised "pulpit."

"God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform." He made the Exile a great blessing to the nation. It was a period of literary activity and Scripture study. A distinct class arose, called Scribes, that gave the people able interpretation of the word; and with them the synagogues and their established schools. It bound together the tribes; and from all nations round there gathered the more earnest and noble with a fuller appreciation of temple service, and, after seeing the contrast of their divine religion with heathen degradation, they never went into idolatry again.

God never puts us under conditions where it is impossible for us to be religious. And the greater the obstacles overcome the greater the victory. When you are inclined to complain that your town, your occupation, or your family makes it impossible for you to live a religious life, "remember the saints in Cæsar's household," and of those in Babylon, and how they maintained their integrity.

Sanballat and Tobiah were "a thorn in the flesh." God sometimes removes our troubles but often He gives us grace to bear them and overcome them. God did not strike dead these two enemies, but He did give to Judah the prophets Haggai and Zechariah.

Nehemiah was a man of prayer, but he acted on the principle that God will do nothing for us that we can do for ourselves. "Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set our watch against them day and night."

XII

ESTHER

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

WHETHER Esther is history, romance or pure fiction is not to our purpose here. There is, however, strong proof of at least historical ground. It is a book of intense interest and great dramatic power. There are more manuscripts of Esther than of any other Book in the Bible and it is greatly reverenced by the Jewish people. One of its principal aims seems to be to enforce the observance of the feast of Purim by reciting the history of its origin.

The Book has been much criticized because in it God's name is not mentioned; and yet, to me, there is a plain reason for it given in chapter two: "The declarations of the greatness of Mordecai are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia?" The Persians' hatred for the Jews is seen all through the Book, and their jealousy for their idols as opposed to the Hebrew religion is seen in the account of the three Hebrews and the fiery furnace, and in Belshazzar's feast and other incidents of this period. It would have been strange indeed if the author had dared to mention the name of God in the chronicles of the Persian kingdom. "Providence" is the key-word and "God is the secret control, and his unseen hand shifts the scenes." Only the eye of faith finds every common bush a fire and tracks the footsteps of the divine through human history.

There is no Book to match "Esther" in the power of its delineation of God's choice of the mightiest instruments and the most trivial affairs to work His gracious will in the protection of His people. It is the story of a crisis in the life of the Jewish nation. Doomed to destruction by an unchangeable law, their lives hung on the slender thread of the whims of the Persian King Ahasuerus, or Xerxes, of Grecian history. His despotic character is shown by an incident in his Grecian campaign. Phythias begged that of his five sons the eldest might remain with him in his old age; the king flew into a rage and had the son divided in twain before the eyes of the unhappy father, and placing a part on each side of the road marched his army between. Other examples, such as throwing fetters into the Hellespont to chain it shows the idiotic shallowness of the capricious and fickle monarch.

The contents of the Book is as follows: Vashti the queen is deposed because she refuses to dishonour her sex by appearing in a "salome dance" or a "living picture" before the lustful eyes of the drunken nobles. The beautiful Hadassah, or Esther, the cousin of Mordecai, the Jew, keeper of the king's gate, was chosen. Soon after this Mordecai discovers and frustrates the plot to kill the king, and that fact is recorded in "the book of the chronicles." Through the instruction of Mordecai her nationality is kept a secret. Haman, the Grand Vizier, sought the life of Mordecai because the latter refused to bow to him; an act, perhaps, implying worship, and to compass his end induced the king to doom the Jewish nation to be slain on the thirteenth of the month of Adar; and as a reward to the butchers "the spoils of them for prey." Esther decides to stake her all on the whims of the king and intercedes for her people.

She gains an interview and invites the king and Haman to a banquet at which the king asks her request and she invites them to another banquet. On Haman's return from the banquet, much elated at the great honour done him, Mordecai refuses to bow to him. At the instigation of Zeresh his wife and of his friends, he builds a gallows for Mordecai. That night the king not being able to sleep asks for the "chronicles," and out of it is read the above account of Mordecai's discovery of the plot.

Haman has finished the gallows and appears in the outer court and when the king cries to him: "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delights to honour?" Haman thought in his heart, "Whom would the king delight to honour more than myself?" and when Haman had made answer the king said, "Make haste and do even so to Mordecai the Jew," it was a crushing blow to his pride. What an irony of fate is this! Haman goes home more enraged than ever and while rehearsing to his friends "everything that had befallen him," he is called for by the chamberlain and escorted to the second banquet where the queen faces Haman with his wickedness, and lays bare his plot to destroy her people.

So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. The Jews were allowed to defend themselves on the day appointed for their destruction. Can we fail to see in this how the lustre of a maiden's eye and the magic spell of love over a king's heart are made a part of the purposeful plan of God for His people's good?

Things do not "just happen." It was not by chance that "on that night could not the king sleep," and that he should call for the "records"; least of all, that the eye of the reader should fall upon the account of the plot discovered by Mordecai. No more was it accidental that Esther did not make her ultimate request at the first banquet. God's plans were not ripe. Haman had not built the gallows. Truly God "maketh the wrath of man to praise him." The hand of providence is shrewdly implied in the speech of Mordecai to Esther: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (4:14).

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

Need we conclude because there is "no song of Messianic Hope," that the "remnant" had ceased to dream and no longer "pondered these things in their hearts"? We could not expect the sacred things to be written in the records of the Persian Kingdom. Esther kept the secret of her nationality. The Purim feast was national rather than religious in spirit. It may be for this reason that there was a legend among the Jews that "all feasts except the Purim will cease when the Messiah comes." We have intimation of the depth of Mordecai's heart in his words to Esther: "For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place" (4:14). Can you doubt that in his heart then there whispered God's promise: "Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob"?

Esther, to say the least, is a striking illustration of Christ and His work. She, like Christ, from the court of the king, volunteers and condescends to jeopardize her honour, riches, and life and becomes mediator between the unchangeable law and her doomed people and triumphantly brings to them a glorious redemption. To her and through her, to them the golden scepter of favour is extended. "This Book is the rose window in the cathedral structure of the Old Testament. If the light it transmits be dim it reveals exquisite tracery and symbolic design."

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

Esther has no direct connection with any other Book. Like "Ruth" it is a beautiful little mosaic; "Ruth," of the social customs of the Jews in the time of the Judges, and "Esther," of the Persians in the time of the Exile. "The first are the Gentiles coming to the Church, and the second is the Church coming to the Gentiles." Progress cannot be reckoned in time from the last Book; for the ground of the story lives fifty-six years after the first return under Zerubbabel, and twenty-four years before the last one under Ezra.

We have already noted some good results of the Exile. One was that they forever discarded idolatry. May this not turn light on the fact that Mordecai refuses to do the courtly act of bowing to Haman? The Book shows how the nation held intact and refused to be absorbed though "they were scattered abroad among the people," no doubt with this aim in view. We see hints here that the Jews had deserved and received the signal favour of God, even before their great redemption by Esther. The wise men said to Haman: "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him" (6:13). Some critics are almost fierce in their denunciation of Esther's alleged "bloodthirstiness." There are certainly mitigating circumstances. The hatred of the Persians so often called "enemies," in the story, must have reached almost a climax, even before the plot of Haman; and urged on by the promise that "they should take the spoil of them for prey," were only too willing to slaughter them.

The Jews act simply in self-defense, and stand for their lives, but on the prey they lay not their hands. Could Christians do otherwise than this? Their lives, the life of the nation, and the hope of the visible Church on earth are all at stake. Haman aimed at utter annihilation as Julian and Diocletian in Roman days aimed at the destruction of the Christian Church. The hotbed of evil plot was the palace, and without "the bloody slaughter in Shushan," and the "dangling bodies of Haman's sons," the evil-doers would not have been deterred; and we contend that like Elijah on Mount Carmel so Esther and her friends in Shushan did well to make a finish of their work. Esther's proclamation of the fast for her people gives evidence of her prayerful spirit and shows how this beautiful queen in a corrupt court had kept her faith. She had encountered and overcome "the devils that go out only by fasting and prayer."

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

"Haman and the king sat down to drink and all of Shushan was perplexed." When those in authority in the city prove recreant to their high trust and in satiation of their own fleshly appetites and passions disregard the public good, woe be to that city. Strong drink, from Noah until now, is a damning, blighting curse. Thank God for the token of the day when the State will no longer legalize the horrible traffic in the souls and bodies of men, yea, and in the very life blood of the nations.

Zerubbabel, Nehemiah and Ezra made great sacrifices for their nation, but when, in the world's history, do we find an example of higher courage and finer patriotism? She knew the whims of the king, and that should he not hold out to her the golden scepter her doom was sealed. She said she had not seen the king "in the thirty days." We have just noted the reason. "He and Haman lay drunk." But after religious fasting and prayer, she rose to utter with a martyr's spirit: "I go; and if I perish, I perish."

Beauty is a gift that may be used for good or evil. The original meaning of Esther's name shows that she was beautiful of face and form. This powerful attribute she consecrated for the salvation of her people and the Church for all future time.

What insignificant things may destroy the pleasures of this world! Haman had everything earthly to make him happy. After boasting of these many blessings he said: "Yet all this availeth me nothing so long as I see Mordecai sitting at the gate." We have what we like if we like what we have. Is jealousy or envy a fly in life's precious ointment for you, my friend? Do you look through green eyes at a Mordecai in your gate?

"So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai." "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." I have heard that a man named Guillotine invented that infernal machine and on one he himself was executed. The prosperity of the wicked is unsafe. We can judge Providence only by the final issue. God, unlike most merchants, does not always square up His accounts in January.

XIII

JOB

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

JOB is one of the "Wisdom Books," the other two being "Proverbs" and "Ecclesiastes." There has been much discussion as to the character of its literature. Between Hebrew wisdom and Greek philosophy there is a parallel yet a fundamental difference. In the former there is no philosophy for philosophy's sake, but for the sake of religion in its practical bearings. With prologue and epilogue in prose, the body is a semi-dramatic poem with epic form and more or less historic basis.

Being named by Ezekiel (14: 14) and James (5: 11) as one of the worthies, we are sure that east of the Jordan in that "strange, lovely, fertile, volcanic region," Job lived and suffered and died. Here, in the words of Carlyle, was written the "most sublime religious poem in the literature of the world." It is fortunate that on account of the "parallelism" of the ancient poetry, having a rhythm of ideas rather than rhyme of words, it loses less in translation than it otherwise would. Though Luther said: "Job is suffering more from my version than from the taunts of his friends."

It is appropriate that an "all men's book, a universal book," should be written outside of Israel and that the author and time of it should be unknown. The problems and truths of it are applicable to the patriarchal as it is to the post-exile age, and no wonder scholars find, to them, convincing proof for placing it in either.

The key-word is "Trial" in the sense of test. In heaven's council the devil asks: "Doth Job serve God for naught?" Then comes the answer, the final word to this question and the treatment of relative problems. Does he serve for property, family, health? They are all taken. For the love of wife? It is turned to hate. For the comfort of friends? It is changed to taunts. The devil tempts to evil but God tests for the good.

There are three cycles of speeches. In two cycles there are four speakers, and in the last only three. In general we might say: Eliphaz, a man with a theory, speaks with the authority of revelation; Bildad, an orthodox conservative of tradition; and Zophar, the dogmatist, from common sense, giving all that earthly wisdom has to offer only to receive the cutting irony of Job: "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you" (12:2). "I have heard many such things," he says; "will vain words have an end?" (16:2). It is often asserted that the principal question of the Book of Job is: Why does God allow the affliction of the righteous? This is a very superficial view, and this question is only incidental. It is the picture of an unswerving fidelity to a spiritual ideal. In the face of sacred tradition, the last word of earthly wisdom in unison with the visitation of God Himself, Job cries: "I know that I shall be justified." In spite of all the appearances to the contrary he can but have faith that the great unseen forces work for righteousness, and this terrific struggle toward higher self and the divine, this loyalty to the Godlike ideal, will end at last in Job's standing face to face with God as a loving father. In the first division, or cycle, the ground is taken that sin is the cause of suffering; and the conclusion drawn that if any man suffers he must have sinned. In the second cycle, particular application is made and Job is held to be guilty. In the third cycle, the culprit is called upon to confess and submit.

Young Elihu charges failure on the part of the three friends to prove their contentions against Job, and asserts that God uses trials for the good of the afflicted one; reproves Job for justifying himself, and vindicates the divine character. To make a true test it was necessary that Job should be ignorant of the reason for his afflictions. Like the Great Sufferer on the Cross, one thing he did know and that was his own innocence.

"My witness is in heaven," he cries, "and my record is on high" (16:19). The mystery deepens; he is utterly bewildered. A righteous God allows a good man to suffer. The world is out of joint. "Who can hinder him who will say unto him, What doest thou?" (9:12). Job stands up, not against the true God but the misrepresentation of Him. It is in protest here that Job hurls out his "everlasting No." He longs to "make plea unto God"; but there is a great gulf yawning between his soul and God. Shouting question after question into the sibyl cave of destiny, and receiving no answer but an echo, he longs for a Daysman that might "lay his hand on both of us." Job is not a stoic, not "a statue carved in ice," but a man of men; with faith undaunted, he fights in the dark, speaks out what is in him, and from the hungry maws of death he comes forth in the triumph of a new life.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

Night, black and starless, settled over Job's sky when from his hopeless heart he shouts, "yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch." The God of judgment seemed so near and the God of love so far away. It is then he cries: "There is no Daysman betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both." The wish becomes a yearning desire, and then a prayer is born to struggle from that night of anguish up through the rift to a new light of hope. "Behold," cried he with clearing vision, "mine advocate is on high," and, beautiful to see, the clouds lift, and under the blue sky of certainty is heard the ringing word: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, that he shall stand survivor over the dust: and after my skin is gone they will rend this body, and I from my flesh shall see God. Whom I shall see, I for myself; whom mine eyes shall behold a stranger no more" (19:25 R. V.).

Ah, how dark without a Daysman! Christ first told us that God loves us, and henceforth we worship not so much with fear the God who sits on the circle of the heavens as with love, Him that "lays his hand upon us." In the words, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," we can only say that Job sees a helper who, he believes, will at last bring him to God his Friend, "a stranger no more." The Messianic idea is growing in his mind; for yesterday God was an enemy to be conciliated by an "Advocate" (10:43–48). Some say that Elihu, like a veritable modern rationalist, would himself act as the Daysman and eliminate the divine element from the Messianic idea. This I deny (33:6). Elihu is thought by many to be a type of Christ. The other three friends preach the law, but Elihu the Gospel, bringing God, repentance and forgiveness, and that while there may be answer to the law the Gospel is the final word. We confess, however, to quite a shyness for this mode of interpretation. On the Elihu sections there has been a long war of words concerning its claim on the original writing. After a close examination of this section and its relation to the whole Book, we are ready to say with Cornhill: "In the entire range of Holy Writ there are few passages which, in profundity of thought and loftiness of feeling, can compare with the Elihu speeches. In content they form the summit and crown of the Book of Job." He shows that suffering, far from being evidence of sin in the sufferer, may be a sincere token of divine love.

These afflictions on the guiltless should have the better prepared Israel for the Innocent One who "yet without sin" was "stricken and smitten."

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

Another motive perhaps for choosing a foreign saint, and Uz far away in the borders of the Arabian desert, for person and place in the narrative, is that the problem is not now a national one but an individual one. In nations, then as now, prosperity followed the good and adversity the bad. Generally speaking, temporal prosperity is the promise of the Old, and spiritual blessing the promise of the New Testament. Here are marked two epochs of civilization. In the first the nation is the unit, and in the second the individual.

In the Book of Job earthly wisdom makes its highest flight to discover the throne of God, and the Divine One speaks the final word for this world, on the problems involved. The main question is asked by Satan: "Doth Job serve God for naught?" In other words, this Accuser announces his principal tenet, to the effect that there is no goodness irrespective of reward, and that "Every man has his price." Such men as Walpole may, but Job loves goodness for Jehovah's sake, and says: "though he slay me yet will I serve him." It may be true that "anybody can be religious on five thousand dollars a year," but this test proved that Job stands empty handed and unbribed in his integrity.

While there is the clear note of immortality, the attempt at the solving of this problem is without reference to that. So a charge of "refined selfishness" cannot be brought against him. Did not God restore him double, and "is not this an addition unworthy this noble poem?" asks a critic. As Daniel was ignorant as to whether the lions would devour him, so Job trusts God in the dark. Otherwise it would have been no test. If men were "paid on the spot," where would be a test for the reality of virtue? "He hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him, but he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold" (23:9, 10). The year in which Ruskin gave thirty-five thousand dollars to the poor, was the year of his severest misfortune, yet this was not Ruskin's last act of charity. I am not saying that Job, like his Redeemer, had no right to see "the glory that was set before him," but I do say that though this goal is removed goodness remains.

Here again, love is the fulfilling of the law. Correlated are some other problems. How can the suffering of the good and the justice of God be reconciled? There are other reasons for suffering than as punishment for sin. We see them in the trial of Job as in the passion and suffering of the Daysman's perfect life. Truly, it is an "epic of the inner life"; and on this field are won the vindication of self and of God, a discipline and an educative development that come in no other way. When the light of earth and sky is shut out there comes that light that does not shine on land or sea. Then comes the revelation that this universe is not a "steam engine rolling on in its dead indifference to grind me limb from limb."

Is there a Providential government of this world? To this question the Almighty gives to Job the last word He has for humanity. In effect He says: "Job, do you understand the instinct of animals created so far below man? If these simple things baffle you how can you contend with God? In short, is it not best to own me as your Heavenly Father and allow me to know many things that you do not?" Why the "robbers" provoke God and are secure, and why the Almighty does not kill the devil is not ours to know. In this forty-second chapter, Job's complaints are hushed in the presence of the universality of the wisdom and power of God. With such a Father, what need to know the meaning of all his trials? So, after the wind and the lightning have played their havoc, there is at last the "clear shining of the sun."

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

What Job's friends said was true in the main, but the application was wrong. The greater the truth, the more damage it does in misapplication. Behold spiritualism, Christian Science, divine healing, as illustration.

"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God," says Paul, as he meditates on the conversation of these friends, and quotes Job 5:13: "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." How needful is a specific revelation!

Uncharitableness is of the devil. "Love believeth all things, hopeth all things." When a man asserts that he trusts no man it will not be good for you to trust him very far. He is the son of his father, the devil.

We learn more here about Satan's attributes than perhaps anywhere else in the Bible; we see his motive in trial or temptation. He is not omnipresent in the sense God is, for he goes "to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it." He is not omnipotent, for he works under the restriction and permission of God. He is an accuser of the brethren and does not believe in the existence of true virtue.

The road to holiness is paved with humility. A "man perfect and upright" is the first to fear God with the cry in His presence: "Behold I am vile; I will lay my hands upon my mouth" (40:4). "Wherefore," says he, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (42:8). This also was the experience of Moses and Isaiah and Simon Peter. Man is not "a worm," as Bildad calls him, but born to an estate little lower than the angels; he has forfeited his inheritance and pleads for restoration.

Love never comes through argument, but of free will through the vision of worthy loveliness in its object. Never by force or intimidation, but, wooed and won, it comes through the trials of a fiery baptism, and at last the gates of welcome to the full realization of a yearning hope. "When mine eyes shall behold a stranger no more; for this my reins consume within me" (19:27).

Job tested his friends as he did himself. When he was prosperous they were plenty, but hear Job: "Unto me men gave ear, and they waited for me as for the rain, but now they that are younger than I have me in derision." Where does that poor young fellow, broken and ruined by the debauching pleasures of this world, go for help? Not to the worldling friends. They have scattered like butterflies before the first frosts of adversity. We often find him waiting at the Beautiful Gate for the merciful Daysman who puts on him the hand of healing restoration. The great and beneficent agencies of the world are inspired by the Church of God.

XIV

PSALMS

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

"PSALMS" is the key and appropriate name of this Book. The "Psalms" are the first and most important of the "Hagiographa" or sacred writings. The word is taken from the Greek meaning to play on a stringed instrument. It is fortunate that Hebrew poetry by a rhythm of ideas rather than by sound of words, the response of thought to thought, the calling of deep to deep, loses so little of its strength and beauty in translation. There are, altogether, one hundred and fifty of these sacred songs. One hundred bear names of authors, sixteen have headings but no names, and thirty-four have neither. Seventy-three are ascribed to David, twelve each to Asaph and Korah, one to Moses (XC), and two to Solomon; yet, on the point of authorship, there is a great diversity of opinion. Every chord of the heart is here touched, and songs from the experience in all the vicissitudes of human life are heard, ranging from the deepest depths of sorrow to the highest heights of joy; and from the violent storms of imprecation to the tenderest lyrics of love and mercy. They are believed to have been collected by Nehemiah, assisted by Ezra and some of them edited and adapted to the religious services of the Temple, either by the above or by others competent to do so.

Like the pentateuch, and, as some think, in imitation of it, the "Psalms" are divided by the Hebrew (LXX) into five books, each division ending with a doxology.

1. The first Book (I–XLI) might be called the "Davidic"; for there is little doubt that the "sweet singer of Israel" wrote all but three or four of them as

he did most of those in the sacred section. This Book is distinguished by the frequent use of Jehovah (Lord), "the covenant keeper." The seer David held in his great heart an unswerving faith in the fidelity of the Lord to Israel, and for that reason a deep reverence for the Lord's anointed. This, to him, was made sure by the nation's history and his own experience. "Great deliverance giveth he to his king and showeth mercy to his anointed, to David and to his seed for evermore" (18:50).

2. The second Book (XLII–LXXII) is characterized by its fulness of historical references. Some think that in its original form the historical was even more marked than now; and that the compilers had less regard for preservation of the original than for adaptation to individual life and temple worship.

3. While there is in the third division (LXXIII–LXXXIX) much historical reference we might distinguish it by calling it the "Liturgical Book," as this is for the most part its form. It is really a continuation of Book two.

4. Of this division (XC–CVI), ten are anonymous and we shall call them the "Orphan Psalms"; two are ascribed to David and one (C) to Moses.

5. The fifth and last division (CVII–CL) is filled with notes of victory and joy of return from the exile; hence we have the Hallelujah Psalms and the Songs of Degrees, collected and arranged, perhaps for the services of the second temple. They are very short, and it is thought it was originally a separate song book for the use of the pilgrims in their journeys to the national feasts at Jerusalem.

Concerning the importance of the inscriptions there is great difference of opinion. A number of them may be unreliable, yet, handed down by tradition, they are our best outside information; and grouping them as "Love," "Memorial," or "Pilgrimage," for uses of prayer, praise, penitence, or doctrine. The first three Psalms with themes on Scripture, Messiah, and experience are said to be keys to the whole collection.

The Psalms by Korah and Asaph are found in the second and third Books. They were Levites and chief musicians having special charge of the temple service. It is rather significant that of all these Levitical songs, there is not a note of confession or repentance of sin in one of them. The four thousand members of the tabernacle choirs divided into twenty-four separate bodies under distinct heads, and led by three hundred skilled singers, to the accompaniment of instruments invented by David, made such religious music as the world had never heard.

Yet these Psalms, however glorious their rendition, derived not their richness and immortality from the harmony of their rhythm nor the musical genius of the Temple choir; but to the music of "the choir invisible," to the voicing of humanity's soul. Here is recorded a faithful history of the heart, on whose fields the greatest battles are fought, and the greatest victories won. The poet is the seer of the essence of things and the revealer of this essence in concrete forms, especially touching the universal relations of things. The Hebrew poets were not philosophers nor artists nor theologians but singers of life's experiences. Heart songs they are that rise from the inmost soul.

We speak the defining word when we say they are religious. When we consider that here we have all shades of light from the gloomy pit of repentance to the gray dawn of hope, the red light of warning, and the white light of illumination, we rejoice that we are the inheritors of the saints of light. Other poets may describe the phenomena of nature; they go behind these to the great Jehovah who created nature. They heard His voice in the thunder, saw His arrows in the lightning, His hiding place in the darkness and His pavilion in the clouds. The growing grass, the falling rain, the sparkling dew and the rising sun are made to sing their songs of praise to a loving Providence, until our hearts become temples of God and there wells up the sweet incense of prayer, and all the world is a cathedral, and all things animate and inanimate join in a chorus of praise (Psa. 96–104).

In the first two Books, we see reflected the life of David. Tending his father's flock at night on the Bethlehem hills, he breaks out (8), "When I consider thy heavens"; or guiding the sheep to food and water (23), "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want"; then protecting them down some of those deep mountain gorges that lead toward the Mediterranean sea, seeming to lead to endless night, "Thy rod and thy staff," says he, "they comfort me; yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil." In this period, too, he sings a song of the sun (19), "which is as a bridegroom coming forth out of his chamber." Then in a beauty unmatched, we hear the hymn of the thunderstorm and the "God of glory thundereth" (29).

Scene, the second; David's boyhood is gone and as a man he meets his trials in the royal court and, hounded by the jealous Saul, he "flees as a bird to yon mountain," and has much evidence of the cold-blooded wickedness of his enemy, but the consciousness of his own innocency, and cries out: "They make ready their arrows upon the string that they may shoot in darkness at the upright in heart" (11). Through the strategy of his wife, Michael, he escapes from his home and makes his way to Ramah. Mercy seems to have fled the earth and he turns his face heavenward; "for the mercy of God endureth continually," says he. "I will trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever" (52). Fleeing to Gath it is a comfort to David to know that God's eye is upon him, and in touching words (56) he says: "Be merciful unto me, O God, for man would swallow me up." "Thou tellest my wanderings," cries he.

He transfers his father and mother to Moab for safety, and becomes a freebooter. Escaping from Ziph, the stronghold of Engedi on the Dead Sea, we can hear his exhausted panting like a hunted deer hard pressed (54). "Save me, O God! Hear my prayer, O God." Safe within the cave of Engedi he gives praise (7). "Jehovah my God, in thee do I take my refuge." The magnanimity of David in the sparing of Saul's life is repaid with a mean ingratitude that stings the soul of the psalmist (35). "They reward me evil for good to the bereaving of my soul."

Then comes the period of David's enthronement, and while yet at Hebron he yearned for the stronghold of Jerusalem, for his capital (18) and Jehovah "bowed the heavens and came down." He finds the empowering presence of God, "for," says he, "by thee I run through a troop and by my God do I leap over a wall." And now, through Jehovah his "deliverer," he takes charge of the new capital and then gives thanks: "Thy right hand hath holden me up and thy gentleness made me great."

David's life, for the most part so beautiful, was stained by murder and adultery in the case of Uriah and his wife, and from this experience there comes a psalm (51) in which the tremulous voice is heard to sob out its deep anguish in a cry of repentance unmatched in this world's literature. As if struggling up from dark depths, he wails, "Have mercy upon me, O God; wash me from mine iniquity"; and then, as if catching a vision of purity, "purge me with hyssop and I shall be whiter than snow." Then with another heart-cry for forgiveness, he feels a still deeper need and cries, "Create within me a new heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." In Psalm thirty-two, we hear his shouts of joy in the pardon of sin, beginning "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." What suffering is sin unconfessed! but "I said I will confess my transgressions unto Jehovah and thou forgivest the iniquity of my sin."

At the removal of the ark to Jerusalem we hear him sing (15), "Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" And at its triumphal entry we hear the glad processional (24), "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting (ancient) doors."

What a picture is that of David, disgraced and almost unthroned by his "beautiful brainless boy," Absalom, as he goes weeping up Mount Olivet (4). "O ye sons of men," says he, "how long shall my glory be turned into dishonour?" and (3) seeming to pass over the hill's brow and night coming on he says, "how are mine adversaries increased." Then lying down on the bare ground: "I laid me down and slept; I awaked for Jehovah sustaineth me." Driver thinks David was the author of only about twelve Psalms, as follows: 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 15, 18, 19, 23, 24, 29, 32, 101.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

In these soul lyrics from the heart of humanity there comes, anon, notes the singer cannot comprehend. Music inborn and spontaneous arises from these quivering strings, as if struck by unseen angel fingers. The earthly musician continues to play, but mingling with his music there is often a sweet undertone that breathes of another world (1 Peter 12). With an ear attuned we can hear the song of the heavenly host at His birth. "Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee" (Psa. 2:7). These words are repeated in the new dispensation of Him concerning whom it had been prophesied: "The kings of Tarshish and the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts" (Psa. 72:10). "Behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

He is to be "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (110:4), and when He cleansed the temple the disciples remembered that it was written "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (Psa. 69:9; John 2:17). His Gospel is to be universal. "O praise the Lord, all ye nations" (117) is quoted by the apostle Paul (Rom. 15:11) in his argument for the call of the Gentiles. On the dignity of man, David says, "Thou hast put all things under his feet" (8:6), but the author of the Hebrews says: "We see not all things put under him but we see Jesus, etc." (2:8). One of the severest trials of Jesus must have been His rejection by His own people (118:22). "The stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner." Our Lord quotes this and the next verse: "This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes." Well, it is marvelous, this miracle of knowledge. That the Jewish Messiah should be rejected was utterly foreign to the program made for the Mighty King of the throne of David. That after a thousand years of history these words should be fulfilled in a homeless wanderer, "a man who had not where to lay his head"; and yet of royal birth and destined to sit on the throne of David. "Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne" (Psa. 132:11).

The earth grows dark, and our Lord sits at the Last Supper with His disciples, looking down the dark valley of the crucifixion. "I know whom I have chosen," He says, and then quoting, adds, "but that the Scripture might be fulfilled he that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" (Psa. 41:9). But "most marvelous in our eyes" of all these Messianic songs is Psalm twenty-two in which we hear the hammers ring for "they pierced my hands and feet." The bolts of pain drive to the heart and "all my bones are out of joint." Our compassionate Saviour hears the prayers of the penitent thief, "for neither hath he hid his face from him but when he cried unto him he heard." From the great loss of blood comes intense thirst, "and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws."

His utter desertion touches our heart. His nation received Him not, His disciples forsook Him and fled and now, more dreadful than all, His Father turns His face from Him and we hear the heart cry of agony: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The crowds about the Cross as the royal sufferer says, "Gaped upon me," "Spoke against me," and He saw them "shake"

[wag] their heads saying, "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him, let him deliver him seeing that he hath delight in him." All the world has deserted Him and suffering and "trouble is near"; and heaven itself is dark, "for there is none to help." The soldiers sit down to gamble for His clothing and fulfill the prophecy "They part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture." Behold, the end is near. In Psalm 31:5, we hear His dying word: "Into thy hand I commit my spirit." For the sake of ceremonial cleanness (save the mark!), the victims must not hang there over night. They pass along to break the bones and hasten death. Our Lord is dead! The Scripture is fulfilled (Psa. 34:20), "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."

O despondent ones, on the road to Emmaus, read Psalm 16:10 and take courage: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [grave], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Peter quoting this prophecy in Acts 2 says: "He spake of the resurrection of Christ." After many infallible proofs of the miracle that meant so much to the hearts and hopes of man, in Psalm 68:18, we stand on Mount Olivet and see fulfilled the words: "Thou hast ascended on high and led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men." Paul uses this prophecy (Eph. 4:8) in his proof for the descent of the Spirit. A cloud has received Him out of our sight, but in Psalm 24:9 we will follow the triumphant and ascending Lord: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." We note here what we see in practically all the prophecies, the double meaning; the commingling of local history and Messianic hope.

Now let us turn back to that wonderful twenty-second Psalm for some of the results of this death, resurrection, and ascension of the Christ. One of the gifts brought to men is immortality; and "your heart shall live for ever." No longer the Jews only, no longer the "seed" but "A seed shall serve him." "And they shall come and declare his righteousness unto a people that shall not be born"; and under the faithful witnessing of these preachers of His powers and resurrection, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord." And little wonder at this, for "The Kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the governor among the nations" (Psa. 22:28).

Surely Luther was right, quoting Psalm 40:7: "In the volume of the book it is written of me," he asks "What book and what person?" There is only one Book, the Bible; and only one Person, the Christ.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

Extending from Moses to the Maccabees, the Psalms cover over a thousand years of human history and have from Moses to now sung a song, matchless in its variety, voicing every mood of man's soul, but divine in its unity of a hovering presence of an all-powerful and all-wise Providence. There are sweet songs of patience, hope, and wisdom; dirges of sorrow; and hallelujah pæans of victory and triumph. There are songs in which we hear the sobs of anguish for sin; and that glad new song of sins forgiven.

The halting, hesitating music of mystery is ever ended in a love song of praise to God who is a Friend, compassionate and covenant keeping. If there is variety there is also universality, not so much of God's revelation to humanity as humanity's revelation to God. Hitherto, God has talked to men but here men talk to God. Not from Sinai but from the heart come the thunders of the law and judgment; not from the Mount of Blessing but from the glad heart of praise cometh the wooing song of grace in sins forgiven.

The Psalms are mirrors in which men see their faults and the roads in which all may walk to the throne of power and help. Awful threats for the disobedient are heard, but also precious promises fulfilled in the experience witnessed, in songs that make the air tremulous with joy. As Mr. Sanford well says: "In lyric flow and fire, in crushing force and majesty, this poetry of the ancient Scriptures is the most superb that ever burnt within the breast of man." There has been much discussion over the question as to whether the Psalter is the Church or the individual. It has been said: "These experiences and aspirations are not personal and individual, but in them we hear only the collective voice of the Church." A few of them may be interpreted in a collective way and some, originally written as personal experiences, may have later been adapted to temple worship.

In the early history the nation had been the unit, yet, as we believe, they had with them the Book of Job presenting in a powerful way, the personal element, and later Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and after the Exile we know the nation was never the unit again. One claim for the collective interpretation is that it explains the Psalms of imprecation.

Through this thousand years of the law dispensation it would have been remarkable, indeed, if often the spirit of love should in some instances be wholly wanting. It is thought by some that the "harsh, merciless vindictiveness" of Psalms like one hundred and nine and one hundred and thirty-seven, would be explained on the ground that they are collective, and yet why should we stumble here? When the author speaks of his enemies he means the enemies of the Church and Christ, but if we believe these Psalms are divine, the burden of their reproach is borne by One able to do so. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is the law of simple justice; the law is an unchangeable, mechanical scale. Grace may bend; law cannot. God is not under obligation to show mercy and grace is not an attribute of God but a voluntary exercise of mercy. Justice demands every farthing of the debt. It is a just debt, and God is under no obligation to forgive it.

The law says that no sin shall go unpunished and that retribution shall follow hard on the trail of the transgressor. Haman must hang on the gallows prepared for Mordecai, and "in the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood." The child had not yet reached his majority and the old schoolmaster still held his ferule. The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, but grace is the mercy that brings Christ to us. These Psalms with their deep spiritual tone come as a corrective to the Old Testament Church. They worshipped God through punctilious ritual and annual sacrifice as a means until the means became the end and the danger was that their religion should become a religion of externals.

Sacrifices are relegated to a very inferior place, wholly ignored or even rebuked. "Sacrifice and offering thou dost not desire; mine ears hast thou opened; burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required" (40:6). We hear the voice of God in Psalm fifty saying: "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?" Then listen to the heart-broken cry of the penitent in Psalm fifty-one: "For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

The formality of religion may be well but purity of the heart is essential. The law said men ought to be pure; the prophets said men are not pure; the Psalmist says men can be pure. In this light, the dominant themes of creation, the Holy City, the King, the Law, the Messiah, Justice, Righteousness, Truth, Mercy and Immortality took on a different meaning. While the last named subject does not stand out in clearest day, for it was not till Christ that life and immortality were brought to light, we have clearer references to the future life than in any book preceding.

A glimpse of the general judgment is given in Psalm 1:5. "Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment." In Psalm thirty-three the deathless soul, "Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him to deliver their soul from death." And in Psalm twenty-three there seems to be a clear reference to heaven, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," as also in Psalm sixteen, "at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" cries the author of Psalm seventy-three; "my flesh and my heart faileth," he says, "but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." In a clearer vision still, David in Psalm 17:15, speaks with much assurance: "As for me I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in his likeness."

There have been a great many ingenious divisions of the Psalms. I use two arrangments; one from Dr. Frederick Bleek, and one from Dr. Samuel Green, in making the following one, by which we have a reasonably accurate classification. The names are sufficiently descriptive:

Didactic Poems: 1, 5, 7, 9, 12, 14, 15, 17, 24, 25, 32, 34, 36, 37, 50, 52, 53, 58, 73, 75, 84, 91, 92, 94, 112, 119, 121, 125, 127, 128, 133, 39, 49, 90, 82, 101, 131.

Historical Psalms: 78, 105, 106.

Hymns of Praise: 23, 34, 36, 91, 100, 103, 107, 117, 121, 145, 146, 8, 19, 24, 29, 33, 47, 50, 65, 66, 76, 77, 93, 95, 97, 99, 104, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 134, 139, 147, 148, 150.

Hymns of Thanksgiving: 9, 18, 22, 30, 34, 40, 75, 103, 108, 116, 118, 138, 144, 46, 48, 65, 66, 68, 76, 81, 85, 98, 105, 124, 126, 129, 135, 136, 149.

Hymns of Devotion: 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143, 3, 16, 27, 31, 54, 56, 57, 61, 62, 71, 86, 13, 22, 69, 77, 88, 143, 4, 5, 11, 28, 41, 55, 59, 64, 70, 109, 120, 140, 141, 143, 42,

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43, 63, 84, 7, 17, 26, 35, 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 89, 94, 102, 129, 137, 20, 67, 122, 132, 144.

Hymns Prophetic: 2, 16, 22, 40, 45, 68, 69, 72, 97, 110, 118.

The production of these sacred lyrical poets cover the entire field of Old Testament revelation; and while they may not make any new disclosures of God's being and government, they do contain an overflowing fulness of experimental knowledge and instruction; and there is certainly a subjective advance in the more spiritual apprehension of the divine law.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

One lesson is that human nature and divine providence have ever been the same in all ages of the world. The truth has had diversified expression, and God manifests Himself differently to every age, but His purpose toward humanity is unchanging. This at least practically accounts for the familiarity of the New Testament writers with the Book of Psalms.

The truth above is expressed in 2 Peter 3:8: "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years," quoting Psalm 90:4. The horrible wickedness of man's natural state as given in Romans 3, is taken almost wholly from the Psalms. When the writer in James 1:26 speaks of the man that "bridleth not his tongue" he takes a figure from Psalm 39:1. In Hebrews 3:7, we have an impressive warning against the resistance of the Holy Ghost. "As the Holy Ghost saith: To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the day of provocation." Over a thousand years before, the same warning is heard in Psalm 95:7.

Paul, in Romans 4:7, quotes the beautiful benediction of forgiveness pronounced by David in Psalm thirty-two: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." When the same great apostle in his list of trials mounts to his climax, "as having nothing, yet possessing all things," he finds utterance in a figure of the

Psalmist "when thou shalt enlarge my heart" (119:32). In the presence of Christ on His throne, John, in Revelation, hears "the new song," but David has sung the same song in the same place, "I will sing a new song unto thee, O God" (Psa. 144:9). The Christian's secret of a happy life, "cast thy burden on the Lord," had been told in Psalm 55:28 ages before uttered in 1 Peter 5:7. Paul was quoting from Psalm 44:22 when he used that bold figure in Romans 8:36, "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long." There is a deep philosophy in that utterance of Christ, quoted from Psalm 37:11, "The meek shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5).

The generous note of the world's conquest was struck by David in Psalm 19:4: "Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." And the great apostle to the Gentiles in Romans 10:18 could not have used a more appropriate Scripture to prove that God's purpose is the salvation of the whole world.

Where in all the Book do we get a clearer meaning of repentance? A genuine sorrow for sin; yes, but far more. It is sin, not against the conscience nor the law nor the injured one; but "against thee and thee only have I sinned," cries the Psalmist. We learn, too, what an important element confession is, and what woe comes to him who "covereth his sin." Repentance is not simply remorse nor an attempt to escape from the sin or the hungry maws of judgment, but rather a remorse for having grieved Him, and a vision of purity and earnest prayer for a new creation with ever the sincere motive to "teach transgressors thy way."

The history of God's revelation and its progress is a history of the evolution of song. Jubal (music) invented the harp and organ almost in sight of Eden's gate, and God's Church has ever since been the Saint Cecilia, the patroness of music, that has made the heavens vocal with angel choirs.

At the crossing of the Red Sea, Miriam leads the hallelujah songs of praise. Deborah raises her voice in songs of victory in the dark days of the Judges, and Hannah sings until judgment melts into grace and we hear the sweet voice of the mother of our Lord joining in the glorious Magnificat.

Christ's birth is heralded by a burst of song. The Gospel of Luke opens with four solos and a chorus. Harmony is the essential element of Heaven, and Elizabeth's beatitude and Mary's magnificat, the "Benedictus" of Zacharias and the *Nunc Dimittis* are answered by the chorus above: "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will to men." Atheism has no song. Discord never sings.

From the *Miserere* to the *Te Deum* and the *Hallelujah Chorus* every mood of man finds utterance. Nay, not every one. The rebellious, unrepentant mood is sullen and dumb. If we remain in harmony with our God and with ourselves we must sing. May you never in this world cease "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart" (Eph. 5:19), with the assurance that if "our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved" we have "a house not made with hands," in which we shall "harp with our harps" and "sing forever the songs of Moses and the Lamb."

XV

PROVERBS

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

ARCHBISHOP TRENT says that "shortness, sense and salt," has been proposed as a definition of Proverbs, but that it fails both by defect and excess. The derivative meaning is a brief saying instead of many words (Pro-verba). These proverbs are matchless in their beauty, pithiness, and point, and all books and dictionaries receive from this source their richest contribution.

The key-word is "Wisdom." "Wisdom is the fear of God, and understanding; a departure from evil." The meaning of the word is here greatly enriched. Religious motives are presupposed or enjoined. This Book with Ecclesiastes is called the Chochmah, or "wisdom books." The wise men seem to be a guild, and did an essential service distinct from priest and prophet. The proverbs are parallels of contrast or comparison conveying some moral truth or practical lesson.

Here is brought into sharp contrast: The wise and the foolish; the rich and the poor; the slothful and the diligent, etc. Barbed arrows are hurled at pride, envy, anger, lying and hatred. He gives a sure cure for gluttony: "Put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man of appetite" (23:2). You see it is only a question of the best method of suicide. At a casual reading you might conclude he takes a utilitarian view since he gives so many warnings against poverty and so many hints on accumulation of wealth. Not so however: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold" (22:1). Riches are unworthy as a chief object in life. "Labour not to be rich" for "wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings" (23:5).

It is sin, not poverty, that is the curse, and righteousness, not riches, that is the blessing. "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people" (14:34). Poverty is a sin if caused by sloth. "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest" (20:4). Riches are a reproach if wrongly used. "He that oppresseth the poor, reproacheth his Maker" (14:31). At last the man is the greatest element in the problem. "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them" (1:32). But there is a golden mean where temptations to sin are least, and for that reason "give me neither poverty nor riches, lest I be full and deny thee . . . or lest I be poor and steal" (30:8, 9).

The contrast between friend and enemy is drawn with remarkable wisdom. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (27:6). More profound still is the statement concerning the mysterious law of association: "Iron sharpeneth iron: so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (27:17). By many a telling proverb, these wise men show how a successful life may be well enough, but how dear it comes when at the expense of character.

We are told in 1 Kings 4:32 that "Solomon spake three thousand proverbs," but most are lost; for the whole Book has but nine hundred and fifteen verses. Perhaps only those were retained that could be used for the divine purpose. For while the Book in its pointed, practical applications has the tone of the street and market-place where its proverbs are supposed to have been spoken it has deep rooting in the religious; and these words are the spirit pervading the whole: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths" (3:5, 6).

Not only does the wisdom of these proverbs give them power over the popular mind, but the ease of their application, coupled with the facility of their test through historical examples, give quick assurance of their truth and confidence in their use. For instance, when you hear: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (1:10), readily there comes to the mind Adam eating the forbidden fruit, Jehoshaphat seated in the chariot with Ahab, etc., etc. With "a soft answer turneth away wrath" comes the picture of Abigail bringing the peace offering to David, Rehoboam and the dividing kingdom, etc. Quote: "But a lying tongue is but for a moment" and Gehazi and Ananias are on the spot. When these words are seen: "The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him" who would not have the picture of Ahab, Haman, and Belshazzar?

Let us note briefly the analysis of the Book:

I. Praise of Wisdom, chapters 1–9:

After the introduction comes a discourse on wisdom, then "My son" is addressed and warned against "strange women," and in the eighth and ninth chapters wisdom is personified.

II. The Proverbs of Solomon—chapters 10–22:16:

These consist of proverbs in two lines loosely arranged.

III. The sayings of the Wise—chapter 22:17–24:

Sayings here often cover several verses but there is no common topic. They are by different authors and seem an appendix to II.

IV. Solomon's proverbs; second collection—chapters 25–29:

Perhaps the most ancient proverbs. They were copied by the scribes of King Hezekiah from ancient wisdom. There is less moral bearing here than elsewhere.

V. The Words of Agur—chapter 30:

This division has a sceptical and enigmatical tone. It seems to be the despair of a man who thought "by searching to find out God."

VI. The Words of King Lemar—chapter 31:1–9:

Some think this is one of the names of Solomon. It concerns the duty of Kings.

VII. An Alphabetic Poem—chapter 31:10–31:
A matchless description of the model Hebrew wife.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

In the personification of wisdom found in chapters one, eight and nine, we find a remarkable revelation of God as revealed in His Son. In 8:22, 23, is found the word, or "Logos": "The Lord possessed me in the beginning, declares wisdom, I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was" (John 1:1). "When he prepared the heavens I was there" (8:27). Christ is the speech and expression of God and "crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets" (1:20). So "Jesus stood up and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John 7:37).

Let us now hear Christ's testimony of God's love for Him. "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom" (Col. 2:3). "I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him" (8:30). The inspired writer seems to be standing on the Jordan river at His baptism listening to the voice: "saying this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). The gospel of Christ's love is also preached here to him that hath ears. "My delight," says Wisdom, "was with the sons of men, now thereof one hearkens unto me" (8:31). So sings the prophet. "For the Lord delighteth in thee" (Isa. 62:4). "Having loved his own which were in the world he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). Ho, every one that thirsteth, and hear the words: "She hath also furnished her table, she hath sent forth her maidens, she crieth upon the high places of the city: Come, eat of my bread and drink of my wine" (9:2–5). Certain foregleam is this of the Great Supper and the gracious gospel invitation (Matt. 22:4).

It is sad that this invitation was spurned: "Because

I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded" (1:24). Then charges Wisdom, "Ye have set at naught all my counsel" (1:25), to find fulfillment in Matthew 7:30 when the Pharisees "rejected the counsel of God against themselves." "But reprove not the scorner, lest he hate thee" (9:8), or as Matthew 7:6 has it, "Neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they turn and rend you." But to "whosoever will" we hear the gracious words: "I love them that love me and those that seek me early shall find me" (8:17). As in the Psalms so here an unseen hand has swept the strings, and the sweet gospel undertone is heard, a music that finds its accord only in the Kingdom of our Christ.

"Blessed are they that keep my ways" (8:32) finds accord in Christ's words (Luke 11:28): "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." The secret of it all is that "Wisdom the Word speaks: Counsel is mine and sound wisdom: I am understanding" (8:14). Then the omniscient One looking down through the centuries, declares: "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice" (8:15). Finding fulfillment in Romans 13:1: "For there is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God." And at the end of Christ's earthly ministry when He was about to return to His Father "He spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matt. 28:18). Mark the significant "therefore."

This Power omnipotent spoke with authority in 8:18: "Riches and honour are with me, yea, durable riches and righteousness." This same authority spoke a thousand years later during its incarnation saying: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). Ah, that we might answer the question: "Who hath ascended up into heaven or descended; who hath gathered the wind in his fist? What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" (30:4). We assuredly can, for "no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13).

Our Lord it was, who ascended from Olivet, and in the storm of Lake Gennesaret, "gathered the wind in his fist and bound the waters in a garment," but who hath descended from heaven? The same who said in 1:23: "I will pour out my spirit unto you." It is the same glad day Joel saw (2:28). That same spirit that brooded over the deep touched this pen a thousand years ago saying: "I will make known my words unto you" (1:23). Under the instruction of the Divine Prompter this author spoke a message that though veiled, is in many regards the clearest note of Messianic hope given in any preceding book. Seen under the full light of day it is marvelous in our eyes.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

The Book is not, as some suppose, simply a collection of wise sayings, but in it is given the true philosophy of life. The fundamental idea of Proverbs, as of Job, is, This world is morally governed. The problem of Job is, Why an innocent man should suffer in a world morally governed; while of Proverbs it is, What is the duty of man in such a world? His first duty is to get wisdom, "For wisdom is the principal thing." Just here is struck the highest note, so far heard, on what we now term, "Christian Education": "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (1:7; 9:10). To show how practical wisdom rests on religious character is the aim of the Book. What the Psalms are to devotional life the Proverbs are to practical life.

We find here no ceremonial law, no mention of sacrifice, no proposal of creed, and the word Israel is not mentioned. Sacrifice stirs the emotions, creeds cultivate the intellect, but practice is a religion of the will. This Book belongs to the last class. How should the motive power of the inner life be expressed in this every-day world of ours? How shall I live the happiest and the safest and do the most good in the world?

Better than a religion of ceremony or creed is religion of life. While the word Israel, as I have said, is not mentioned, Jehovah's curse is man's most terrible penalty and His blessing the highest of all rewards. Morality is not simply a rule of conduct to make men decent but is character grounded in Israel's laws and identical with Israel's faith. There are only a few faint gleams of life beyond the grave. "The faith of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (4:18).

While the things of the outer world receive the most attention let us not think that the writers forget the true source of all conduct. Attest: "From the heart are the issues of life" (4:23). "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord" (20:27). "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." And here is one mystical enough for St. Paul: "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits" (16:2). And this one: "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways" (14:14) means that evil creeps into the heart before a man startles a neighbourhood with outrageous conduct.

Solomon sets the example of the study of nature, and lessons are drawn from the habits and instincts of the lower animals. We have also the first ideas of systematic education. These marvelous pictures of character are due to the "waking of the general mind to the laws and conditions of human society." The habits of ants, conies, locusts, spiders, the ox, the thorns, the field, etc., are all used to good purpose. For genial humour, sparkling wit, and biting sarcasm there is no match for Proverbs elsewhere in all the Scriptures.

A few proverbs will illustrate: "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion" (11:22); here the incongruity of a beautiful woman with ugly manners is shown by hogs and jewelry. What sarcasm in the following, for those who fail to "train up a child in the way it should go": "Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with a rod he shall not die" (23:13), meaning that you need not get frightened when the boy yells out, "You are killing me!" You keep laying on MacDuff, and "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (19:18).

What merciless stings are given the lazy man! "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the street" (22:13). A man of energy and enterprise sends a "poke easy" on a mission requiring great dispatch, but "as vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him." He grinds his teeth with impatience till they are "on edge" and looks for his return till his eyes pain him as if filled with smoke (10:26).

This wise man has this warning for the old bachelor: "It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house" (21:9). If you are cooped up in some close bachelor quarters, even the gable end of a house, it would hardlly be safe and wise to marry some rich woman with a wide house unless you are pretty certain about her disposition. But here is warning for us all: "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears" (26:17). Here is the picture: A man is strolling down the street and hears a row in some house. Stepping in he finds a husband abusing his wife. Being tender-hearted he interferes and both man and wife "pitch into him" and we see him running out coatless, hatless and woebegone. We at once see the point that to interfere in a domestic brawl is about as dangerous as to take a dog by the ears.

No other Book of the Old Testament surpasses the spirit of forgiveness shown to enemies: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head" (25:21). This kindly spirit extends even to the lower animals: "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast" (2:10; 24:29).

There is no tragedy like Job; no pastoral like Ruth; no lyric like Psalms; and no Proverbs like those in this Book.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

Here are practical lessons, hundreds in number, wonderful in variety, and finished in preparation, for immediate use. Here are arrows ready for the bow, lanterns lighted for dark paths, red lights to warn of danger, and harps of wooing sweetness. So polished are some of them that you can yet scent the varnish.

"For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life" (6:23). Folly and sin are no mere obstructions but are as real as Satan in the Book of Job for counterworking the gracious purposes of God to men. Finding wisdom is finding God; and "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom," for the reason that he is in accord with God's laws written in his flesh, and in this world; for "the Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth."

But men must be wise to read these laws, for "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the way thereof is death." Hence these warnings against the pleasures of this world are sound to the core. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Not simply for the prudential reason that "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man," but a remorseless law runs through all nature and is merciless on the culprit. "I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh."

Justice and mercy are enforced by many a pungent saying, one of which says, "Bind them about thy neck." That is well. "Write them upon the table of thine heart," that is better. "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord," hence that irrevocable law. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is mete, but it tendeth to poverty" (11:24; 13:7). In this connection two other fools are mentioned: "He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich."

The gigantic evil of strong drink, before which other public evils are mere pigmies, is given here in all its hideous forms and in fuller treatment than in any other Book of the Bible. Do you drink to drown your troubles; to treat your friends; to warm you up; to give you nerve; to build up health? Write wisdom's words in your heart, "Wine is a mocker." You are not through paying for these drinks when you hand your money to the bartender. Soon come "woe" and "sorrow" and "contentions" and "babbling." And in the dark remorseful days that follow are "wounds without a cause," "headache" and "redness of the eyes." Total abstinence is the safe thing, my son, for at last strong drink "biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." After such a warning "He that is deceived thereby is not wise" (23:29).

Then, my son, allow me for your own sake, for God's sake, and for the sake of unborn generations, to "deliver thee from strange women." No judgment of God is more signal than that visited upon the sin of impurity. "Her house inclineth unto death." "Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned?" In this connection let us notice a Scripture that men "wrest" oftentimes unto their own destruction: "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." They seem not to observe that Folly is talking.

No surer rule for making friends has ever been given than this: "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly." Far better than through deception, for "he that hideth hatred with lying lips is a fool." Here is one showing sharp contrast of friend and enemy:

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

The tongue is a very "unruly member," and much advice is given concerning its control. "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from trouble." Especially is it well to keep silence in the presence of a "talebearer that goeth about," for the simple reason that "where no wood is there the fire goeth out." Don't deceive yourself with the belief that he won't tell, for he "revealeth secrets" and "where there is no talebearer the strife ceaseth." On the other hand: "The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life," and "words fitly spoken are like apples of gold in pictures of silver." The reason is not far to seek, "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger." "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright." And in this we see, as Christ said, how a "good tree bringeth forth good fruit." And, as says the proverb, "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life."

XVI

ECCLESIASTES

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

OF all the wisdom of the ancients, this Book is the finest monument, with the exception of Job. The name means "the preacher," or the "speaker of an assembly." The Hebrew title, "Koheleth," has given way to the Greek one, Ecclesiastes.

Regarding the authorship there is great division of opinion, but whether Solomon wrote it, or whether it is a dramatic personification of the "Son of David, King of Jerusalem," its sterling worth to the world is the same. Whoever the author, certainly not Solomon himself, he was full of contradictory elements, or rather he is representing Solomon as being so. Using an incisive Greek philosophy, and yet true to the ideals of the Hebrew, he may be said to have a Greek head and a Jewish heart.

Written almost entirely in prose, it has a prologue, four acts and an epilogue. Solomon, it has been thought, wrote the Song of Songs in youth, the Proverbs in middle life, and that this Book is the penitent reminiscences of his old age. Perhaps its not having been written for publication accounts for the wandering at times from the plan. From Abraham to David we heard God for the most part talking to man; in the Psalms, man talking to God; in Proverbs, man talking to man; but in Ecclesiastes we have man communing with himself. The soliloquy concerns things "under the sun," and we find this key-word about twenty-five times.

At first view Koheleth seems to be a pessimistic sceptic, but a closer study shows that he has in mind a wise purpose. Do things under the sun bring the greatest good? Solomon, of all men, is best qualified to make the complete test. In the grosser world he tries pleasure, honours, riches, and "all is vanity." Labour, wisdom, art and culture and even friendship and love utterly fail to give satisfaction. He becomes a fatalist, a materialist, epicurean, and stoic; and behold in it all there is vanity and vexation. Debauchery, building, and bookmaking all end in bitterest disappointment. "Under the sun" there is nothing new, nothing satisfying. Life is not worth living. "All his days are sorrow and his travail grief." And death ends it all and man goes down to the grave with no hope of resurrection for body or spirit; for "man hath no preëminence above a beast." "Under the sun" nature is assigned to a monotonous treadmill existence. Round and round it goes "and there is nothing new under the sun." He sees the sun, the wind, and the rivers making unceasingly and everlastingly their earthly circuits.

"The preacher" gave his heart to learn wisdom, and he certainly learned something of nature. "The wind goeth toward the south and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually and the wind returneth again according to his circuits" (1:6). Those who study wind currents tell us that cold air contracts and as it goes south it warms and expands and rises, and a colder air filling the place in turn becomes warm, and thus the air is preserved from stagnation. "All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; into the place from whence the rivers come thither they return again" (1:7). In case the preacher did not have in mind the ancient pagan idea that the rivers returned by underground passage, he shows a knowledge of evaporation and condensation, with a history of clouds and springs, that would do credit to a modern natural geographer. And if you will read carefully the twelfth chapter you will see that Harvey did not first discover the circulation of the blood. If the power of this world's wisdom could have broken away from these circles, surely Koheleth would have made a straight road for his feet. But "under the sun," "what is crooked cannot be made straight" (7:13).

Only through the gates ajar into the life beyond the sun there is hope. In chapter 8: 17, he began to learn what Job learned; that "no man can by searching find out God." Through these personal experiments and observations the great conclusion is reached by induction, and we "hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man"; or, better translated, "this is the whole of man." In the life under the sun, things go in a circle, but Godward is eternal progression.

In the twelfth chapter the old age and death of a pagan is given in contrast to a life finding God in youth and through communion with the Creator, the horizon of earth is lifted; and a prospect of life immortal and the revelation of God's justice in a general judgment, breaks on the vision, and the life of man "under the sun" is joined with the life of man above the sun in completion and satisfaction of the "whole man."

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

The thought of the Messiah seems to be entirely lacking in this Book. When, however, we consider that its aim and purpose is to show the state of life "under the sun," without the prospect of any other life, we see how to carry out the plan, the "Son of Righteousness" must be excluded.

Some think Christ is strikingly prophesied in 9: 14–15: "There was a little city and few men within it and there came a great King against it and besieged it and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man and he by his wisdom delivered the city, yet no man remembered that same poor man." We think, however, it is an abuse of the text to say the little city is the Church; the few men, the Apostles; the great king, the devil; and the poor wise man, Jesus Christ. Neither do I think the passage in 9: 16, "Wisdom is better than strength," is a direct reference fulfilled in Mark 6: 2. It can be used only as an illustration of the truth contained. At the beginning of the paragraph from which the above references are taken, we have the introduction: "This wisdom have I seen also under the sun."

Some translate the name of the Book as "Wisdom, the son of David," and then apply the application to Christ; making wisdom the personification of Christ as He is in Proverbs. Another indirect, and rather doubtful, Messianic allusion is found in 8:2: "I counsel thee to keep the King's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God." This possibly refers to the oath of God with reference to Solomon. "I will stablish the throne of his kingdom forever" (7:13). Though Christ is not lightly veiled He is deeply set in the Book.

This earnest quest for happiness and peace, if successful, where must it end? Surely not "under the sun." The vexation of Koheleth is not because he has no God. He does not dream of questioning the existence of a personal being omnipotent, omniscient, who is absolute ruler of the universe. He lacked the revelation of that God in him who was sent to bring "Life and immortality to light." Between Moses and Paul he is the only Biblical writer making reference to the fall of man. The "first Adam" plays the main part in his plan, but the "second Adam" gives "the conclusion of the whole matter," for He is the truth, the life and the way; the truthful way to eternal life. The power of earthly circles are broken; "death, hell and the grave" are conquered; earthly prison gates are opened, and a way made throneward.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

It is pathetic to see that million of slaves led by Moses through the wilderness. Watch them as they grasp for everything that would act as a medium between them and God. They belong to the kindergarten department and as "Infants crying in the night, infants crying for the light, and with no language but a cry." Listen to Job's sad lament: "There is no Daysman that he might lay his hand upon us both." In tender, passionate strains David sang: "As the hart panteth for the waterbrook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." Here in Ecclesiastes is the quest for satisfaction. It is a cry from this fitful feverish life under the sun. The utter despair of quenchless thirst for the water of Life.

In the study of the Book of Job, we showed you that one of the problems is, Why in a world of moral order does an innocent man suffer? In the Book of Proverbs we saw that the question is, What is the duty of man to man in such a world? In Ecclesiastes the problem is, What is my best course in this world for my own well-being? It is a soliloquy, a meditation and, hence, above all other books it makes a new discovery in the inner thoughts of men. It can hardly be called a search of the conscience for light on life's duties, or a search of the heart for sin, nor, as some think, "for a reconciliation between God and His world." Solomon presumably in his old age has fallen into a brown study and thinks aloud. Some friend may have written it out. If so, he seems to have given us a "literal translation."

His reminiscence takes him through his experiences as a man of wisdom and pleasure, business, and politics, immense riches and moderate competence; and in each of these earthly states he speaks out frankly and unreservedly his thoughts. Passing through periods of scepticism, fatalism and materialism, he gives us a thought history unequaled in all the world's literature. The universe with reference to humanity, according to Koheleth, God has arranged in circles and appointed to everything its due season. This was done to impress the fear of God on men. God was apprehensive that man would climb too high, and these circles are made so great that he is lost in his calculations, and good and ill occur without any accounting for them. "To everything there is a season, and a time to everything under heaven."

He acknowledged that "God hath made everything very beautiful in this endless round of nature, but he hath set the world (eternity) in their heart; so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end" (3:11). It seems to say that to further complicate things a struggling intimation of an eternal and heavenly life has broken into these earthly circles. In the first chapter where he gave test to materialism, he was disgusted at the contrast of the uniformity and eternity of nature as compared with humanity. "One generation passeth away and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth forever."

In the last chapter that great discovery is made that man belongs also to a circle, but it is an "eternity" circle, whose round is once made. "Then shall the dust return to the earth and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." He had thought that "that which is crooked cannot be made straight," but he discovers that while the body belongs to earthly circles of monotony, the spirit makes one round of the circle and then takes up a straight line of eternal progress. Some have shuddered to follow Koheleth around the earthly circles; but when we consider the strongly subjective nature of the narrative, and especially the waking from the soliloquy at the close, we need have no fear of this "ungodly and sceptical Scripture that has been unwisely allowed a place in the canon."

The note of universality is very distinct. Some think it was prepared by Solomon for the conversion of his many subject Gentile nations and allies. Another noticeable thing is the sanity and balance shown by the author; a golden mean as it were between austerity and sensuality that Jesus exemplified in His earthly life. Everything is not condemned as evil in itself. Man should enjoy the fruits of his labour, neither should man become morbid and be filled with care for the future. Though they differ in argument, Koheleth and Christ reach the same conclusion: "Take no thought for the morrow," says one author, "for there is none." "Take no thought for the morrow," says Christ, for "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

This Book illustrates the truth that the "Scriptures are like a railroad ticket; not good if detached." There is here, as in the Book of Job, many passages that separated from their connection are utterly false, and foreign to the teaching of the whole Book. We have a peculiar case here when the argument, in a sense, is false and the conclusion true. The Book is a hemisphere or half hinge without the closing chapters, and cannot be interpreted or rightly applied for use but as a whole. Many have judged the whole truth from a single sentence, and as in the case of liberalists and worldlings, have "wrested the Scriptures to their own hurt." Using this method in interpreting Ecclesiastes, permission can be found for many sins that the Book as a whole most powerfully condemns. It is thus, for instance, easy to prove that a man may be wicked, but for fear of wreck to his body it is best not to be too wicked. "Be not overmuch wicked neither be thou overmuch foolish; why shouldest thou die before thy time?" (7:17). By this method we may prove that "there is not a just man on the earth"; that "all things come alike to the good and to the wicked." And there is no reward for goodness here, and no judgment hereafter; that there is no life beyond, that a man hath no preëminence above a beast, and "all go unto one place"; that to gain happiness, to satisfy appetite, to eat and drink, and rejoice and be merry, should be our sole object in this life.

And yet what book gives such unanswerable argument proving the utter folly of wickedness, that men will receive rewards for every secret thing whether it be good or whether it be evil, that the object of life is not to "eat, drink and be merry," but to "fear God and keep his commandments"; and that man does not go down with the beasts but his spirit goes up in its "return to God who gave it."

Strange as it may seem in a soliloquy, suggestive hints on service are given. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might" (9: 10). Stranger still this exhortation coming from a man whose imagination found so many things to do that the things his hands found were sadly neglected. And yet, perhaps, this the better qualifies him to speak. A beautiful and humble service is suggested in the words: "Cast thy bread upon the waters," and a shrewd observation is made on methods as follows: "If the iron be blunt and he do not whet the edge then must he be put to more strength; but wisdom is profitable to direct" (10: 10).

It is a lesson powerful and convincing for remembering the Creator in our youth. Exhaustive demonstrations are made from experience and observation, and by induction the final conclusion is reached. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, when the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them." He knows that "to everything there is a season," and that the springtime is the season to sow seed. There comes a time when it is too late to sow the seed, for the "evil days" have come and no harvest of (the whole man) complete manhood can be reaped. When the devil pleads antiquity he retains possession. The seed of youthful sin brings a harvest of aged sorrow.

One of the most patent lessons we learn, is that earthly pleasures have their limitations in their power to satisfy. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing and the ear with hearing." Written in the flesh are bars to gluttony, drunkenness, and sensuality. The appetites are sated but not satisfied. There is no law of flesh or spirit against infinite measures of love, truth, or those eternal things that find their fullest realization in the world above the sun.

XVII

THE SONG OF SOLOMON

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

THIS Book is not quoted by Christ or His apostles, but it has always been counted canonical. It was translated by the authors of the Septuagint and given in all the ancient catalogues. It won its place in the canon from the belief that it was written by Solomon; and perhaps the scribes had a faint idea of an allegorical application afterward given it. Origen was the first to work out and commit to writing the Book according to the latter method. The key-word "beloved" is the endearing one of the lover.

It is perhaps the most obscure Book in the Bible; and opinions greatly differ as to its interpretation: but be that or the occasion of the beautiful song what it may, two lovers play the principal parts, with love for its soul, and love expressed in beautiful passionate earnestness, its immediate and dominating purpose. Some say it was a succession of short lyrics strung together for use at marriage feasts, hence the name Canticles. Others think it is a song in celebration of Solomon's marriage to a daughter of Pharaoh or to a maiden of Shunem (6:13); some even naming Abishag, for whom they say the king had his brother slain (2:20–25).

Most modern scholars, however, accept Ewald's view that the story is as follows: A beautiful country maiden of the North caught the eye of the king in one of his grand tours, and by force was taken to Jerusalem and added to his harem. The ladies of the harem, in their high praise of the king as given in the opening words of the poem, and the endearing blandishments of the royal monarch, fail to win her love for Solomon. She holds in her heart the sacred memory of her shepherd lover, near her Northern home, and the splendour of royal magnificence cannot efface it, nor the power of Solomon's kingdom make her disclaim it (1:7), etc. The king, at last, seeing the futility of his purpose, allows the humble shepherd lover, who had lingered anxiously about the palace, to return with his happy bride to the mountain home north of Jezreel. The happy couple, pledging each other deathless love, are given a rousing welcome by their fellow shepherds, and the maid is rewarded by her brothers for her incorruptible virtue.

The supposed indelicacies have always been a bar to this Book's general use. These, however, all disappear with a proper translation, a healthy mind, and a fuller knowledge of oriental customs. "As those parts habitually uncovered with us are free subjects of description, it is no shame for them to dwell upon the beauty of that part habitually uncovered with them." According with the above story we have the following analysis:

1. The king's first attempt to win the maiden's love (1:9–2:7), assisted by the ladies of the harem (1:2–8).

2. The second attempt is spurned by the maiden, whose heart is far away (2:8–17). She dreams of her lover (3:1–5), and wakes to see the approach of Solomon in royal state (3:6–11), whose love she again refuses (4:1–7), and her memory again goes to the shepherd lover (4:8–5:1), and of her "beloved" she again dreams (5:2–8).

3. The third attempt is made, and the court ladies wonder at the maid's fidelity to her absent "beloved" (5:9–6:3). And the king makes one last effort and she even more passionately declares her intention of remaining steadfast (6:4–8:4).

4. The Song closes with expressions of joy at her reunion with her lover in her mountain home (8:5–14).

Into the question of authorship we shall not enter, except to raise the question whether Solomon would have written a book so severely criticizing himself and his court.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

In the Book's literal aspect there is little difficulty, but many think the poem undoubtedly had a higher aim, being an allegory showing the relationship between God and His chosen people, or Christ and His Church. The Song has been followed out according to this method, giving every minute circumstance a mystical meaning, with no authority whatever save their own fancy. In accord with this method, Bernard preached eighty sermons on the first two chapters. Keil and Hengstenberg, though differing between themselves, are the principal modern scholars holding the traditional view. There is not the slightest indication nor reason, in the poem, for such an interpretation. The Song of Songs is among the earlier Books of the Bible, and yet these well-intentioned students attempt to read into it conceptions that would do credit to the most advanced ideas of present-day Christianity.

Do you think the self-centered and apostate King Solomon, with his threescore queens and fourscore concubines and virgins without number (6:8), is a proper type of the immaculate purity of our Christ? Is this corrupt court a foregleam of the heavenly kingdom? I say no. If the Book is so "rich in Messianic type," why is our Lord, the burden of whose earthly ministry was to express His and His Father's love for the world and the Church, so strangely silent in His quotation from this "sweet song of the loving communion between our Lord and His Church"? Why should the apostolic writers, the mystic Paul, for instance, in his oft-used comparisons of human and divine love and figures of espousal of the Church to Christ, fail to make use of a casket so full of such "bridal jewels"? (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:31).

From the earliest times, scholars have concluded that because such figures are used in other Books of the Bible, the Song of Songs must have some such mystical purpose here. We say, because it is so abundantly and with such unmistakable clearness used elsewhere, why come to this obscure Book and assume the responsibility of speaking with the voice of Christ to the Church and of the Church to Christ? This taking for granted mode of interpretation, I believe is damaging both to our holy religion and to good morals. Into the sublime concept of the love of Christ has come, through this delusion, a morbid, sentimental element. No doubt also it has brought a certain effeminacy into our virile Christianity, which has ministered much to a sensuous immorality, revolting to the pure in mind and insulting to the stainless purity of Christ.

It is certainly unfortunate that the headings in our English Bibles speak of Christ and the Church as if taking the allegory for granted. The superscriptions here, of course, are not a part of the original text, and were placed there without authority. The average reader, however, is by it predisposed to accept this false interpretation as indicated. The intention of an allegory is to teach spiritual and ethical truth, and if there is no evidence of symbolical meaning, surely none is intended, else the allegory fails in the end designed. Here none is found and the burden of proof is on him who asserts it. God puts no premium thus unnecessarily on obscurity in His revelation, affording men the liberty of interpreting it according to their preconceived notions. That would bring confusion and anarchy into Bible study, and contempt for it as the voice of God. That the Book has a worthy and ethical aim, I shall proceed to show.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

The poetry of this song is unparalleled for beauty. The exquisite and graceful movement woos the mind at will to the beautiful spice gardens of flowers, to the mountains of trees, birds, and pastoral scenes of snowy sheep and cooing doves, leaping gazelles and running brooks, beside which the lovers sit plighting their troth and swearing their fealty each to each. With the fragrance of the apple blossoms there floats the sweet music of the wedding song, all rustic to be sure, but as graceful and witching as "a young hart upon the mountain of spices."

The Rabbis had a saying: "Of Solomon's temple, Proverbs is the outer court, Ecclesiastes is the holy place, but Song of Songs is the holy of holies." The very name "Song of Songs" means that of all songs this one is the most beautiful. This one best serves the purpose of bearing the message most essential for that age and that the divine word might be complete and adequate to all the varied needs of humanity.

Polygamy and unlawful marriage had ever brought calamity on God's people. No judgments of God's were so signal and terrible as those visited on sins of impurity; as, witness Sodom, and "in the matter of Peor," and on David for his sin with Bathsheba. The Book is a protest against polygamy in a time when this was the universal custom. A song of compelling sweetness on the chaste purity of betrothal and wedded love was a godsend to an age when a corrupt court was sending out a miasma so deadly to religion and morals. Is this an unworthy aim for the Book? We think not. Bible students have failed to give a mystical interpretation to the last chapter of Proverbs, which gives a matchless description of a model housewife; and yet they have never been charged of "falsity to the revelation of God" for failing to do so. Here, in far sweeter strains, is given the story of a maiden's fealty of faith to her betrothed lover, humble though he be. Custom had laid down every bar to purity and she was face to face with boundless wealth and worldly fame; and flattered by the persistent attentions of the most magnificent monarch the world had ever known. In this most notoriously impure court, she retired into the citadel of her own chastity and won her battle. Unbought by honours and riches, unblinded by the dazzling splendours of the court, she followed her heart and its sacred and heaven granted love and laid joyously her hand in that of the shepherd of Shunem.

Israel had reached the crisis of social life; and, if ever led by the second Adam, back to her lost estate, must needs have a new lesson on purity and marriage. While the writer is unknown the historic value is great. It confirms the old prophetic records, and shows the influence of Solomon on his and succeeding generations.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

One general lesson only, let us take from this Book: When a woman marries for the sake of titles, honour, or riches only, she commits an injustice against manhood, a crime against womanhood, and a sin against God. Good homes are the sure basis of Church and state; bad homes or none mean infidelity and anarchy.

In every marriage where love is, there is a heaven-blessed home. Whatever else there be, if there be no love, not only has a fatal mistake been made, but a sin has been committed. See the last Song: "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." "Love is strong as death, ardent love is mighty as the grave; its darts are darts of fire; a flame from Jehovah" (8:6).

In Proverbs the problem is, What is the duty of man to man in a morally governed world? In Ecclesiastes, What is my highest good, and how can I best attain it? In Song of Songs the question is: What part should prudential reasons play in a woman's marriage? Are purity and constancy worth while amidst such seductive influences as an oriental court?

XVIII

ISAIAH

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

ISAIAH, the son of Amoz, the greatest of the prophets, began his prophetic career during the last year of Uzziah's reign, 760 B. C. The meaning of his name "Jehovah is Salvation" is the most prominent idea of the Book. His father was a man of God, else the son would not have borne this name. He is blessed with the companionship of a wife who is a prophetess, so that living just at this time of the favoured tribe in the holy city, all conditions conspire to give the world its mightiest prophet. While most of the other prophets lived in obscure places and had little controlling influence in the nation, Isaiah lived in Jerusalem, and as statesman and prophet was a power in the direction of national affairs. He lived under the reign of four kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

To understand his prophecies, we must know something of their historical background. Public morality was at a low ebb and "the old paths" of religion were lost. It was an age of show and luxury, and the people were cowardly and superstitious. Ahaz winked at the oppression of the poor by the rich. When threatened by Samaria, the king rejected the counsel of Isaiah and formed an alliance with Assyria that brought destruction to the Northern kingdom and made a vassal out of Judah. Good Hezekiah gave ear to the prophet, and the great army of Assyria under Sennacherib was destroyed outside the city gates by the Lord of Hosts. Thus, true to the meaning of his name, the great prophet had announced the only true and safe policy. Assyria on the north and Egypt on the south, each had ambitions for world dominion. This was not God's aim for Judah, and Isaiah insisted that Jerusalem trust in Jehovah and let the storms of war sweep by; but again and again the words of God's spokesmen were rejected, with the final result that the capital city was destroyed and Judah was carried into Babylonish captivity.

The one great lesson God has for them is dearly learned. Not from the worship of Baal nor alliance with Egypt or Assyria comes aid, but "Jehovah is Salvation." They learn that "the Egyptians are men and not God, and their horses flesh and not spirit." They have depended on a "broken stick." The Assyrians "flee for fear of the sword" and at last it is fulfilled that "the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge."

In the Book, there are two clearly marked portions: The first part contains thirty-nine chapters, and the last, twenty-seven. It so happens that the chapters thus divided correspond respectively with the number of books in the Old and New Testaments, and, stranger still, that as in the Old Testament we have for the most part law and in the New Testament, grace, so in the first part of this Book we have burdens of "woe," and in the second part "comforts." In the first the great enemy is Assyria, and the prophecies concern Judea, Israel, and foreign nations; and in the second part, or book of "consolations," the great enemy is Babylon, and the prophecies concern Israel's restoration and the Messianic King. But "the wrath of God is ever tempered with His grace"; and if he preaches the judgments of Jehovah his aim is ever clear. "And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my Salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation" (12:1, 2).

The outline briefly is as follows: In chapters one to six he arraigns the people for their sins and announces his call. In seven he foretells the desolation as a result of the refusal of Ahaz of the advice of Isaiah, but in chapter nine the prophet breaks out in a song of deliverance for "the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." In chapter eleven, tenth verse, a still clearer vision has come, "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people: to it shall the Gentiles seek." In chapters thirteen to twenty-three is described the sin and destruction of Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Arabia, Jerusalem, and Tyre; and in twenty-four to twenty-seven we see the prophecies being fulfilled. "By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged." In chapters twenty-eight to thirty-nine is an account of how Hezekiah hears the counsel of Isaiah and trusts God instead of Egypt, and wins through Him a signal victory; but also how foolishly he showed the ambassador of Assyria his great wealth. Then follows Isaiah's prediction of the Babylonian captivity.

While in this section there are outbursts of God's judgments on sin, which for sublimity have never been surpassed, the Church is also enriched by Isaiah's apocalypse of tender messages of consolation, which have been her stay through the ages since.

In part second, forty to sixty-six, we have one continuous prophetic discourse. The great prophet henceforth becomes truly evangelical and preaches salvation through our Christ under the figure of the Ideal Servant. A number of modern scholars hold that this section was written by a later prophet, but external evidence is all in favour of the unity of the Book. One ever-present purpose runs through the Book; one ever-developing idea dominates its history, preaching and prophecy. The world powers in succession or combination can never overcome the Kingdom of God. "Woes" are visited on sin and "comfort" comes to the righteous. A beautiful ideal is ever kept in view and God's people are urged toward its realization.

Let us not confound the agency with the "Holy One." Salvation is not of Assyria, Egypt, or Judah, though they may be used as a means to carry out the purpose of the

Holy One, for Isaiah's name is the key of the Book—"Jehovah is Salvation." While we allow that it is possible some exilic prophet wrote part second, we do not allow the doubt that Isaiah could be transported into that age and from that future viewpoint become the spokesman of the faith and hope of his own and future generations. While we might with many mental reservations accept the conclusion, we could not accept the argument by which this conclusion is so often reached: In other words we cannot eliminate the predictive element from prophecy. While we believe nothing is gained in the dismemberment of the Book, and its distribution to a number of authors, we would agree with the suggestion of Delitzsch: "If we only allow that the prophet was a prophet, it is of no essential consequence to what age he belonged."

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

In beautiful colours, abiding and lifelike, is portrayed the Messiah. Each prophet has given his characteristic touch to the glorious picture of Christ, but Isaiah is the master artist. Its evangelical spirit has given his prophecy the appropriate name of "The fifth Gospel." It is a bridge between the Old covenant and the New.

In the first division we have the Messiah as King. In 7:14, His birth is given: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel." Another of the "child prophecies" is the glowing vision of 9:6: "For unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." The seventh verse gives His Davidic descent, as does 11:1, under the figure of the "rod" (sprout) that shall come forth out of the "stem" (stump) of Jesse. These Scriptures, with the figure of the suffering Servant found in the second division, if well considered, should have given the nation entirely different conceptions of the Messiah from that entertained at His birth and of His Kingdom.

He had complained in the opening verse of his prophecy, "my people doth not consider" (1:3). In the closing verse of the fifty-second chapter, just before giving the gospel of redemption by vicarious suffering in chapter fifty-three, he says: "For that which had not been told them shall they see and that which they had not heard shall they consider." Some deny that the child prophecy (7:14) has any reference to Christ, and are driven to the explanation that the evangelist in Matthew 1:23 "made the identification erroneously, as the prediction was fulfilled in the age of Ahaz." It seems that our great prophet has broken one of the principal canons of criticism made for him by some modern scholars. We have seen how he is charged with breaking the law that "The predictive element shall be in all cases excluded from prophecy," and here he is arraigned for breaking the same law; for he seems to predict the birth of a child in his own day and prophesy the virgin birth of Christ in the same reference (as given principally in chapter fifty-three).

In the interpretation of the Messiah, under the figure of the Servant, there is the greatest diversity of opinion. Is this "Servant of Jehovah" the Jewish nation? Or is he the purified remnant? Or can you think he is the prophet himself? Or is he some prominent historic personage who seems to fulfill the aim God had in the nation? Neither "yes" nor "no" would be the proper answer to any of these questions. The correct answer to them all means an insight into the nature of redemption and the spirit of prophecy. It is true as G. A. Smith says: "Prediction of the future is only a part, and often a subordinate part, of an office whose full function is to declare the character and will of God."

The nation is spoken of as a servant and appropriately so; but the prophet clearly distinguishes from this servant of the Messiah who speaks for himself and describes the twofold nature of his mission. "Listen, O Isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people from afar; and he said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified" (49:1–3). It had ever been the purpose of God that He should be glorified in the nation of Israel. But Israel has failed and now in verse five, listen to another Servant: "And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his Servant, to bring Jacob again to him, That Israel be not gathered yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength."

Our Lord and the evangelists certainly identified the Servant with Christ. "And the Eunuch answered Philip and said, I pray thee of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself or some other man?" Some critics would have answered "yes," others that he meant the Jewish nation, but Jesus is a good representative of the nation and exemplifies the elemental principles involved in the purpose of that nation. Philip was no casuist, and so "began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus." He was no rationalist, and knew that Christ our divine Lord derived not His power from being the noblest representative of Israel. He must have believed with the author of Philippians 6, who preached the Christ who thinks it is "no robbery to be equal with God" and the one who "took upon him the form of a servant" and at last "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Christ also must have been vague in His discourse to the Emmaus disciples: "Ought not Christ to suffer?" He asks, and, as these critics agree, refers most likely to Isaiah 53; but if the latter are right and Christ is sincere, He must assure them that He is not "directly and immediately" but only "presumably and mysteriously meant."

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

First, let us note some of the marks of Isaiah's greatness as a statesman, his inspiration as a prophet, and his superior style as a writer. As we have seen, everything conspires to make him the greatest of all the prophets. "In Isaiah all kinds of talent and all beauties of prophetic discourse meet together." His position, fearlessness, genius, and aggressive conservatism combine to give him power as a statesman. His principal policy was to trust in God and distrust foreign civilization. Isaiah was conscious of his commission from the living God. He denounced soothsayers, or seekers after "familiar" spirits, teachers of lies, friends of wine, and arraigns others because they "regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands" (Isa. 5: 12). And further, as to his credentials as a true prophet, witness the destruction of the Assyrian army (37: 36). His choice of words and expressions, his striking metaphors, the compactness of his style, the sublimity and beauty of his periods, his choice of subject and the general arrangement of his material, place him on an elevation never reached by any prophet before or since.

Portions of this Book read like the New Testament, breathing as they do such an evangelical spirit. In great clearness and beauty are given Christ's birth and character, person, mission, humiliation and glory, with an apocalypse of "a new heaven and a new earth" in the world's evangelization. In the darkness of the historical crisis how gloriously does he point the nations to the star of hope! Radiantly the grace of God shines out in these messages, glowing as with a live coal from the altar, ever lighting the way of man's moral and spiritual progress. It was given Isaiah to throw new light on the way through which God purposes to bring humanity in harmony with Himself.

The Messiah henceforth takes on a new meaning. No longer is He simply to be a preëminently great leader to "restore Israel"; but to be endowed with superhuman attributes. Beginning in lowly estate He is to become not only the glory of Israel but of the whole world. Jehovah on His throne He is, but also Immanuel, "God with us." The thought henceforth is not to be only of the One who inhabiteth eternity, but One who is to dwell with the "contrite and humble spirit" (Isa. 57:15). While coming from the house of David He is the "Mighty God," and while true to the spirit of the messages of other prophets, He will conquer the world, He is withal the "Prince of Peace."

His conception of the Messiah is most unique, however, in the figure of the suffering "Servant." It is the first clear expression of the vicarious passion and death of the long promised Deliverer. One of the most remarkable of his predictions is the final reconciliation of Egypt, Assyria, and Israel. "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance" (19:25). In proportion as the thought of independence waned, the horizon lifted. With the earthly throne at Jerusalem wrecked, and the holy nation scattered, came the evangelist of the prophets to preach a spiritual and eternal Kingdom and a world-wide salvation. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (45:22). "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (52:10). Tears clarify the vision.

More than any other prophet he looses the hands of the nation from the earthly and material and fires their hopes for a mystic Kingdom to be realized in Him who comes into the desert of human life with the joyous invitation: "Ho, every one that thirsteth. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (55). It is an all powerful and unseen Kingdom; it is to come as silently as the dews of heaven and to permeate with new leaven the foundations and fabric of earthly thrones until, marvelous to see, "the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ."

In the closing chapters, with a grander sweep than all, He seems to stand on the mountain of John in Revelation and in apocalyptic vision cries: "For, behold, I create a new heaven and a new earth." In such a conception as this, no earthly throne can be the seat of His power and no temple confine His glory. The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye built unto me? and where is the place of my rest? (66:1).

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

The first chapter makes a worthy introduction to the Book. Note the eightfold sin of the people, closely followed with the eightfold cleansing. In verses two, three, and four, we see how they rebelled against God, were ignorant, inconsiderate, and sinful, and how they were corrupters and had forsaken and provoked the Holy One. True to the burden and purpose in the Book, the law of God and the conviction of sin are closely followed by the gospel of salvation in verses sixteen and seventeen: "Wash you," "cease to do evil," "learn to do well," "seek judgment," "relieve the distressed," "judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" and "though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow."

The Book teaches that liberty in the supreme sense is gained by self-denial, that real power comes by way of humility and suffering. The philosophy of this world runs counter to that given by this prophet. Those with the despised "remnant" with God are more than a match for all the combined nations of worldly power. The minority in the right will conquer a frowning world in the wrong. Those that sit in great darkness are they that have seen a great light.

The "suffering servant" becomes the King and master of all the powers of earth and heaven. The "tender plant" is a tree of life; and a "root out of dry ground" shall be set up as an ensign for the nations. This suffering One has no comeliness or beauty, yet is indeed for the "Lord of Hosts" "a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty." The rejected becomes the adored, and the afflicted becomes satisfied. The poor are the rich; those that have no money buy and eat. The servant is slain, yet prolongs his days until no mathematician of earth can "declare his generation."

What can it all mean but that writ large and deep in the moral nature of humanity is the law of the Cross: "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:39). Walking in the steps of Him who became a "servant" for us, let us take up the cross and the cross will take us up. "If I be lifted up (on the cross) I will draw all men unto me." Walking this road of self-denial, let us all become "sons of God" and saviours of men.

XIX

JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS

THE KEY TO THE BOOKS

THE author of this Book, Jeremiah, was the son of Hilkiah, a priest of Anathoth, a village in Benjamin. He was called unto the office of prophet in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, and five years before the "finding of the law." Through this and three other reigns, in all over forty years, he prophesied through the most troublous epochs of Judah's history. The book bearing his name is a combination of biography, history and prophecy.

His lot is indeed a bitter one, and his task difficult. Besides the adverse external conditions he was, by nature, of a mild and timid disposition, and was possessed of a passionate love for his country. Yet he is true to his call from Jehovah and hurls at his beloved Judah these judgments of God. "It was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones and I was weary with forbearing and I could not."

For the better understanding of these two Books let us take a glance at the history with which they are so closely identified. In Josiah's reign, in whose reforms the prophet must have been a powerful aid, he seems to have prophesied with little hindrance. In Jehoiakim's reign a plot was formed by the priests to take his life. Being restrained from appearing in public he committed to writing his predictions according to the command of God, and sent his secretary Barach to read them in the temple on a fast day. The king heard three or four pages then flew into a rage and cutting the roll to pieces, cast it into the fire and gave order for the arrest of Barach and Jeremiah. "Jehovah hid them" and the prophet rewrote his message, "and there were added besides them many like words."

The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, overcame the Egyptian king at the battle of Carchemish. Our prophet at once grasped the situation and saw that the only safety in Judah was to yield to the inevitable. His warning is unheeded by Jehoiakim and his son and successor Jehoiachin, and the three months' siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar ends in the exile of the elite of the Holy City into Babylonia. Zedekiah is made king under oath of allegiance to the latter kingdom. Zedekiah foolishly entered into negotiations with Egypt and brought back the besieging army. Jeremiah advised the people that it was useless and suicidal to resist, and was charged with desertion to the Babylonians (21:1–10).

Confined in a dungeon for a short while, then in a "guard court" and at length in a disused cistern, from which he was released by the friendly Ethiopian of Ebed-melech, only to be again confined in the "court guard" in the palace where he might be convenient for Zedekiah who consulted him from time to time regarding the issue of the siege. At the capture of Jerusalem he remained in that city until he was forced to accompany some Jews into Egypt.

True to the key-word of the Book, chapter one, which is an introduction to the whole Book, orders him to announce the tidings of woe to his own people; and chapters two to six are a terrific arraignment for sins of ingratitude, impenitence, idolatry and immorality. In chapters seven to ten the prophet preaches in the gate the ever memorable sermons calling the people to repentance and warning them against trusting in the temple. With eyes streaming with tears he entreats them to turn from their sins and escape the calamities about to break in fury over their heads. In chapter twelve the consequence of disobedience is stressed, and under the type of the linen girdle, destruction to the land is prophesied. The great famine in the land is also used as a type of coming desolation, in chapter twelve. In chapters fifteen to seventeen Judah's captivity is predicted. Pashur mistreats the prophet and receives his awful doom—chapter twenty. In chapter twenty-two, judgments are pronounced upon the Kings of that age. Chapters 23–29. Into this blank night of God's judgments there come here rays of hope for the Messianic King, lasting but a moment, and then the sad picture of the destruction of the beloved Jerusalem and exile of the people for seventy years.

Then comes the judgment of the false prophets who lessen this time. In chapters thirty to thirty-three he sings a song of consolation only to enter again in chapter thirty-four into the desolation of the Holy City under the just judgments of God. The next two chapters are out of place chronologically, as are a number of other chapters in the Book. From here to the close the prophet announces judgments against Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Elam and Babylon.

The Book of Lamentations is an appendix to the Book of Jeremiah, by the same prophet, though it does not contain his name. The beautiful poems were certainly not written near the times of the tragic scenes narrated, but sufficiently removed to lend enchantment and allow reverie to speak untrammeled. They were evidently, however, written by an eye-witness of the scenes portrayed. The Jews rank the Book among the "rolls," and have it read each year in the synagogue on July 9th, the anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem.

This is an elegy sung at the death of the old Jerusalem. A funeral dirge of the city that will never live again. The Jerusalem that will be is New and as yet unsung. In these poems is found the delineation of the effects of sin and the direct results of the judgments of Jehovah. No speculations on the mystery of sufferings like Job are here, but rather an afterglow of the meditative thoughts of the year and a half siege that seems now like some horrible dream. Among the prophets of

Israel, Jeremiah was the voice of one crying in the wilderness of national ruin.

Here certainly is the man who said (Jer. 9:1): "O that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears." This great emotional patriotic soul broods over days agone until the memory of terrible experiences is mellow, and relief is found in Lamentations.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOKS

In the days of Zedekiah when judgments were falling like hail on the devoted head of his beloved Jerusalem and the executioner's ax threatening each day to fall on his neck, Jehovah discloses to him the Lord's perfect Anointed One. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch (Sprout), and a King shall reign and prosper and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. And this is his name whereby he shall be called: The Lord our Righteousness" (23:5-6).

In contrast to the bad shepherds (kings) that scatter the sheep, Israel is to have a Shepherd of Righteousness whose subjective wisdom will give him objective success. In Jeremiah's use of this mysterious Branch spoken of by Isaiah and Micah, he greatly enriches and spiritualizes the meaning of the Messiah. Ewald and others attempt by reference to 33:16 to refer "The Lord our Righteousness" above to Jerusalem; but the chief stress here, as Orelli shows, is on the Branch; and in the former passage we have "in his days" instead of, as in the latter, "in those days."

Whatever view be taken the precious germ of truth is there. As in Isaiah we have the Immanuel "God with us" rather than a mighty King high and lifted up, so here His character is given as one not of earthly power but of heavenly grace. Isaiah lived in the day when the mighty army of Sennacherib felt the curse of the omnipotent One, and Jerusalem was saved. Jeremiah lived in the dark days when Gentile kings ruthlessly destroyed

Jehovah's city and carried away Jehovah's people. All this while the Messiah is still the "Mighty God" or triumphant King to reign with "judgment and justice" from the throne of David (23:5; compare Isa. 9:7). Jeremiah is driven to the further announcement of a new covenant, a spiritual throne and "The Lord our Righteousness." Thus is purged of much dross the Messianic idea by virtue of the perfected ideal to be realized in Christ.

Some scholars believe that the suffering Servant in Isaiah 53 is the persecuted and martyred Jeremiah; and that his real sufferings, as described in the prophecy and sung in the Lamentations, are none other than a type of One who is more than a prophet. There is at least a striking similarity between the soul cry of bitter anguish over Jerusalem gone, as given in the sad elegy of Lamentations, and the sorrowful words of Christ spoken over Jerusalem doomed. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, etc." They each stand at corresponding epochs in history to witness their sins and herald their hopes. The most relentless persecutors alike of the prophet and of Christ were the priests. Christ is seen a sheep led to the slaughter, and Jeremiah in like manner describes his persecution. On the cross Christ cried out the opening words of Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This Psalm is by some ascribed to Jeremiah.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOKS

In the vision of the restoration there is preserved and glorified especially two elements of the past, namely, the priesthood and the monarchy. It is not, however, in the exalting of things past that the prophet is unique, but rather in his break with the past. The old state is to be dissolved and a new covenant with Jehovah is to be founded.

Other prophets had visions of Jehovah as a standard of righteousness and of the nations gaining righteousness through a tried and sifted remnant, but here one prophet mounts to a superb height of spiritual vision. He sees Jehovah as the inward energizing spirit to lift his people toward the realization of that high standard. Stress must no longer be put on the external theocracy but on the inward righteousness. "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (31:33).

It is not strange that with this remarkable pronouncement the great truth of individual responsibility should be emphasized: "But every man shall die for his own iniquity; every man that eateth sour grapes his teeth shall be set on edge" (verse 30). In verse thirty-four is the declaration of God's mercy in the forgiveness of sins. The outward shell that has in the past protected our holy religion, will be no longer needed. "They shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord; neither shall it come to mind" (3:16).

In his prophecy of the abrogation of the Mosaic law and the passing of the external symbols of religion, one of the most remarkable passages to my mind is: "Trust ye not in lying words saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these" (7:4). As we stand in the light of this "New Covenant," with the rich inheritance of Jewish and Gentile thought, we see nothing strange in a conception like this: But a long, fierce struggle, a baptism of blood, the loss of all that the Jew held sacred, and the agonies of Babylonian exile were necessary to the birth-hour of such a master conception as Jeremiah gives his people and through them to all humanity. No longer confined to single orders or castes, "all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest."

Another feature in which Jeremiah excels, is his deeply emotional nature; stirred profoundly by the tragic events of his stormy life, he utters without reserve the oracles of Jehovah. As we hear these messages we can but feel they come from a great, sensitive soul, at times overpowered by the burden of disappointment, but ever having the tireless aim to bring his people into the light of a new day. Where in all the Old Testament do we find such deep springs of human feeling? We miss in this prophet the majestic periods of Isaiah, the intellectual daring of Job, and the magnificent visions of Ezekiel; but Jeremiah is the "poet of the heart"; and mingling with all his messages, even those of the wrath of Jehovah, is heard the undertone of heart-breaking sobs for the sins of his people.

With no ties of social life, no sympathy from his people, no wife for his home, but wrapt in his own solitude, as much alone "in the gate" as in the dungeon, he presents the most sorrowful figure of the Old Testament Scripture. No other Book in all the Bible has such images of pathetic tenderness, such expressions of patriotic feeling, or such utterances of penitence and trust as the exquisitely beautiful elegy of Lamentations. A funeral dirge to the theocracy, but a song of hope for the resurrection of a more glorious form, it served well its purpose of assuaging the grief of his people in exile; and, thanks to the peculiar arrangement, the poems were easily carried in memory through succeeding generations as a reminder of the days of their deepest humiliation.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOKS

The enemies of God have erred in believing they could annihilate His Kingdom through persecution. "The Kingdom of God is within"; the "Lord our Righteousness" is King; and Roman eagles and French revolutions and German diets and Spanish inquisitions have been used by Him as powerful agencies for the driving of His people to a cleaner and more trustful life; resulting in an irresistible force that has never lost a battle nor made a retreat. Night has come that the stars may shine. Through that awful siege, the old Jerusalem grows dim;

and driven into exile from all earthly hope they find in spiritual vision a new Jerusalem.

The enemy burns the bridges behind Jehovah's people, blots out the Shekinah glory of the past and compels them to look to the future for relief. The child must leave the cradle and learn to walk. Is the city of the eternal throne, so dear to every Jewish heart, and immortalized by song and story through all the ages past, to be entirely forgotten? "No," would cry the psalmist. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."

Jeremiah had intimations of that far-off day when Christ, standing by the well of a hated land, proclaims that the time has come when men would worship neither in the Samaritan mountain nor at Jerusalem; but that "God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." It had ever been Jehovah's intention to transform with spiritual light the nation's sordid vision of earthly glory. We can now see that through the ages past, God was ever the Captain, and with storms without and mutiny on board this divine Columbus was destined to bring humanity to the New World of spiritual inheritance. But what is true of the nation and humanity is true of you and me.

The great sin of religious people is that of mistaking the means for the end. From worshipping at Jerusalem they worship Jerusalem. Their religion becomes a superstition, and the ark is held in such reverential fear that the spirit never mounts above it. The Eternal city is the one John saw, the vicar of God is the spirit of God, and no church has power on earth to forgive sins. When the King sends us a message of good will He does not expect us to give our adoration either to the messenger or to the message. The King is jealous for our whole-hearted love, and often removes the messenger and compels us to come to the palace. We believe that God often closes down the horizon of our earthly hopes that heavenly prospects may open to view. Does God deal bitterly with us when He refuses us an outlook that an uplook may be given?

"The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The Bible is not a sword with which to commit spiritual suicide, but a sword of light with which to pierce the dark heart of God's enemies. We shall not become blinded by the letter, like the priests of Anathoth and Jerusalem, and lay plots against God's messengers of spiritual progress. Rather let us with the open vision of Jeremiah, overcoming every hindrance of inward disposition and outward obstacle, prove true to our "high vocation," to our country, and to our God. If there ever comes the bitter trial to us as it came to him, when we must choose between the two, let us, as did he, surrender our country and cling to God. Sad indeed are the wails of the elegist in Lamentations. These deep regrets, these sobbing utterances, these heart-breaks set to music, are seeds of hope and prophecy of restoration. As by signs and symbols and history faintly foreshadowed, Jerusalem has not become the palace of a King, but the holy place and typical seat of religion.

XX

EZEKIEL

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

THIS "prophet of the iron harp" was a priest of the house of Zadok, and was carried away to Babylonia in the first exile, 597 B. C. Let us keep in mind the two captivities. The first, when Nebuchadnezzar deported over ten thousand people, including Ezekiel and Daniel, and the second, when Jerusalem was utterly destroyed by the same general, eleven years later.

Ezekiel lived in his own house by the river Chebar, where the elders of Judah met for counsel and mutual comfort. For twenty-two years he prophesied to the glory of Jehovah. During the first eleven years, the national life was divided into two streams, one in Judah and one in Babylon. During this time Jeremiah prophesied in Judah, and there is every indication that his prophecies greatly influenced Ezekiel, who was in the real sense the prophet of the exile.

At his call he assumed the name Ezekiel, meaning "God is strong"; so appropriate to his times, his call, and his task. He sees God's glory in Revelation, Creation, Providence, and Grace. His task is the record of this "glory" as it departs from the temple in the nation's days of sin and idolatry and returns in the nation's restoration. From the enthronement of Jehovah above the cherubim on the lid of the ark of the covenant, chapter one, to the prophetic description of the new temple given in the closing chapter, the glory of Jehovah, with a priestly key-note, is the ruling element of the Book. We here see the flame of the divine wrath, hear the rushing mighty spirit, and behold the glorious majesty of Jehovah.

As God's majesty bears the idea of His exaltation above all earthly things, and perfection in all those attributes that we know to be inherent and divine, so His "Glory," as Ezekiel shows us, is the manifestation of God in earthly things. In other words, while "majesty" means the display of His holiness, our prophet's constant aim is to reveal His "glory" as the manifestation and restoring power of His righteousness. This thought is Ezekiel's distinguishing characteristic. "And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes" (36:23).

In this sense the glory of God must be the prophet's main purpose through his bitter task of disenchanting his people; his divinely imposed restraint from weeping for his wife's sudden death; through the months of awful suspense when he was forbidden utterance concerning his beloved Jerusalem; and in the sad messages at last of the utter destruction of the city of Zion, the glory of God is ever present. "And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east; and his voice was like a noise of many waters; and the earth shined with his glory" (43:2).

Everything is traced to the Lord's grace as an ultimate ground; and to this glory as the supreme end. The divine righteousness, executed in judgment on Jerusalem and the heathen, because by their iniquity they prevent this manifestation, has in view the cleansing of the earth destined to become filled with the glory of God. The fact, too, that "Thus saith Jehovah the Lord" occurs one hundred and twenty-one times, coupled with the prophet's designation "Son of man," so peculiar to this Book, bears the thought of the utter inability of man, without the help of the divine, to speak the message of God. The same thought is expressed in that wonderful vision of the dry bones, chapter thirty-seven. In the mysterious vision of God (38:14), representing how all the powers of evil will be utterly destroyed: "Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord God" (39:13).

And thus a glorious day for Israel is nigh at hand. God is coming to His temple to abide forever: "And the glory of the Lord came into the house." Yet in it all, Ezekiel recognizes only a faint semblance of God's essential glory. Standing at the very culmination of these marvelous visions, he recognizes man's inability to do more than reveal "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah." There are three main subjects in the Book: The downfall of Judah; The judgment on foreign nations; and The glorious restoration.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

Ezekiel represents the Messiah as a Prince-Priest. He not only receives his share in the land division but bears a peculiarly intimate relation to the sanctuary (46). The kingly element is made prominent in the restoration of David to the throne, and the old order of the priesthood is given in such detail that some think Ezekiel gives too much importance to the externals of religion.

I hope, under my next division, to show that injustice has been done our prophet at this point. "I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary" (11:16). Surely we see in this, that he does not lack spiritual conception. While the Messianic salvation is made more prominent than the personality, "My servant David shall be a Prince over them" (34:24), means neither the people, the remnant, nor the prophetic order, but the "Prince," a Person, even the Christ.

David, who ministered at the altar, represents perfect mediatorship between God and his people; and they who make him and the "righteous Sprout of Jeremiah, or the suffering Servant of Isaiah," a collective, rob these ideal images of their grandeur. This "one shepherd" (34:23) will perfect the virtue of David to the salvation of the Church. With this thought in mind, Ezekiel removes the crown from the head of Zedekiah, "the profane and wicked prince" (21:25–27), and gives it to him "whose right it is." This Messiah is to be One who is not only of the blood of David, but is also to be possessed of his trusting, God-fearing spirit. The climax of the national life of Israel was reached under David and Solomon, but the ideal was still in the future, and our prophet sees another David, the "One Shepherd," destined to find final fulfillment in Christ, "the lion of the tribe of Judah."

David is identified with the "righteous sprout," the "cedar twig," and of course the resurrection of the dead. David in the real historic sense is not to be thought of. "I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon a high mountain and eminent; in the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it; and it shall be a goodly cedar, etc." (17:22). This can mean nothing else than that Jesus Christ should come as a servant in humble conditions to lay, with His passion and blood, the foundation of His everlasting Kingdom. The shadow of things eternal will vanish and little Mount Zion will become, through the incarnation, morally, the loftiest of peaks; and the earthly throne of David, the type, will sink into insignificance as compared with the transcendent glory of the throne of Christ the Architype.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

The history as given under the Book of Jeremiah is virtually the same as that under Ezekiel; and their messages are much the same. The first began to prophesy thirty-four years before the latter and continued for six years after Ezekiel's first vision. Daniel prophesied in the same period, but long survived Ezekiel. He is not a seer like Isaiah, not a reformer like Jeremiah, nor a statesman like Daniel; but a priest as is no other prophet. More than a hundred times he is called the "son of man," signifying to the exiles of Israel that he was mediator between God and them, and faintly foreshadowing the greater Son of man.

At this point, our prophet has received his severest criticism. Some think he unduly stresses the importance of the law and the externals of religion; and that his prophecy makes no progress; but "rather retrogression in the revelation of the spiritual." As we have seen while Jeremiah did mention priests and the temple and sacrifices and the ark of the covenant, etc., he saw the more perfect day when there would be no priests, no holy place; and all would be in equal nearness to the Lord from the least to the greatest; the day when the temple and the ark of the covenant and the tables of the law would give place to the spiritual temple; when the law would be written in the heart. Not so with Ezekiel. He could not set forth that new day except in the old forms.

Those who charge him with simply rewriting the visions of Jeremiah must grant him decided and independent thought at this point. In his new temple there will be sin offerings, ceremonial laws of the "clean" and "unclean"; and, far from the passing of distinction between priest and people, it will be more marked than ever (40:45). Both prophets saw the same glorious Messianic times, but each one, according to his characteristic mood, described the old as passing away, and Ezekiel in a no less forceful way the filling of the old forms with the Spirit. The outpouring of the Spirit upon Israel and the glorifying of Jehovah, not only upon Israel but also by putting a new spirit within, is the peculiar Christology of the Book.

To Ezekiel, these Old Testament forms were something more than useless drapery. To him they were yet needed to better express to his own age a dawn of better things, and to give hope for an immediate reorganization of religion. The new Kingdom and its King, as he thinks, will shine all the more brightly for their association with the old symbols; and the glad new heart will find more appropriate expression through the ceremonial messages from the other prophets. "Old things pass away." But what shall we say of Christ's words: "I came not to destroy but to fulfill." There is no contradiction. It has passed away in that it was no longer vital to religious life. It has been fulfilled, in that it has become history in the progress of divine revelation.

The Immanuel, or "God with us," of Isaiah, the "Lord our Righteousness," of Jeremiah, find a commentary in Ezekiel (36:25–26). "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." This passage does not read as if the prophet were "chained by legal forms," but rather reads like a page from the New Testament.

Ezekiel the stern, uncompromising Jewish patriot, who, in a strange land would reinspire the dying hopes of his people, can but see the temple in all his visions; but most important, his visions carry to the goal even to the purifying of the life and regeneration of the spirit. He sees the fountain flowing from (46:2) the temple through this desert world bringing life and health to dead and dying humanity.

Where, in all the Old Testament, is tender, compassionate forgiveness more clearly revealed than in chapter 16:60? His people cannot claim by the covenant right what Jehovah gives of His own free grace. We hear in this, too, the note of universal salvation, but more significant still, the same mercy shown Jerusalem is shown to Sodom as a representative of the Gentile world.

God's glory overleaps the boundaries of the Jewish nation and becomes the "fulness of the whole earth." The temple is not banished from his vision, but God can be independent of it and send new light "out of the north."

In natural temperament there is sharp contrast between Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The first is the prophet of a dying nation, and though his nature recoils, he is compelled by divine power to utter its doom. Ezekiel's message is no less severe, but his stern, austere nature rendered it more in keeping with his disposition. Isaiah is the prophet of the intellect; Jeremiah, of the feelings; and Ezekiel, of the fancy. We might name them in the order of faith, love and hope.

Ezekiel is a great, strong nature; his imagination a furnace of seething metal, or, as Hengstenberg says, "A spiritual Samson, who, with strong arms, grasped the pillars of the idol temple and dashed it to the ground." In the blending of realism with the lofty idealism, our prophet is unique. His figures of architecture, his knowledge of foreign nations, his mastery of materials, and his symbolic visions are unsurpassed by any other prophet. No prophet was ever so conscious of being a prophet in a genuine sense, and no prophet had a wider sweep of vision, and, strange to say, a greater love of details.

There is very close sympathy between Ezekiel and Deuteronomy, and yet we find in the Book more than eighty points of contact with Revelation. So that, standing about midway between, he reaches back for the old covenant and transforms it with a new life for his people's immediate use; and going forward, meets the apocalypse of John; thus making a complete clasp to the whole revelation of God to the human race.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

What then, is Ezekiel's message to us? When we consider with Ezekiel, God's omnipotent power, His unchangeable truth, and, above all, His executed righteousness, our hearts should swell with gratitude for the knowledge of His divine mercy as shown by our prophet. In the crash of sinning nations, he points not so much to the wrath of God as to the hatefulness of sin; and rules of conduct are given for us under these judgments. He tells us how we can escape hypocrisy, presumption, and apostasy from God. God, he shows us, will not look on sin with any degree of allowance.

Over these wrecks of sin-cursed nations, he would point a still more important truth. If God is thus powerful to destroy, much more will He manifest His power in the kingdom of His grace. In Ezekiel's prophecies, individual responsibility finds its most explicit statement. He shows how, if a man "turn not from his wickedness he shall die in his iniquity." You will not be saved, my friend, because you have as blue blood as Nicodemus, and as faultlessly righteous a father as was Samuel, or as exalted office as had David. It will be possible still for you to slight the gracious invitation of the new covenant of grace and go down to death. "I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways. Repent and turn yourselves from your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin" (18: 30). Furthermore, your responsibility does not end here. You must invite and "warn the wicked"; for if you fail here God says of such a man: "His blood will I require at his hands" (3: 18). Thus, even under the new covenant, Christian people are, in a sense, saved by their works.

As Moses saw the pattern of the tabernacle "in the mount," Ezekiel in a mount of vision saw the same tabernacle in its purity and perfection of forms. It is only on mounts of vision and communion that we will ever get light on life's duties; and, only then, as the glory of the Lord took up His abode forever in Ezekiel's tabernacle will He abide in this our tabernacle of the flesh.

XXI

DANIEL

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

WITH the exception of the meager knowledge gleaned from the book that bears his name, little is known of Daniel. He seems to have been royally born of the tribe of Judah. He was taken into Babylon while yet a lad (B. C. 605), and held places of influence under three kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius.

The Book has only twelve chapters, the first six being principally history and the last six prophecy. In the Hebrew Bible it is classed with the "Sacred Writings" or Hagiographa. It is written in two languages; the portion between the second chapter, fourth verse, and seventh chapter and twenty-eighth verse, being in Aramaic, and the remainder in Hebrew. The prophecies are given in the form of dreams and visions; and deal chiefly, if not exclusively, with the fate of the kingdoms of this world in contrast with the triumph and eternity of the everlasting Kingdom. "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (7:14). It is clear that "The everlasting Kingdom" is the key idea of this Book.

The history of Daniel himself is very closely connected with his prophecy. The fact is, the rise of this Hebrew exile to the place of highest power in the world's great kingdom at Babylon, strikingly images the unfolding progress of the Kingdom of God from the deep gloom of the exile, to the glory of Christ's Kingdom "that shall not be destroyed."

What an irony of fate, or rather, what a providence of God, that our seer, from the very palace of the world's power, should announce its evanescent glory; and, more noteworthy still, that Nebuchadnezzar should receive the dream that heralds the doom of his own Kingdom, Babylon, and the rise of the "Everlasting Kingdom."

Following is a brief outline of the Book:

Historic Section

1. Daniel and three companions in Babylon.

2. The king has a dream of a great image and Daniel interprets it. The image has head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and feet of iron and clay. A little stone destroys it.

3. The three Hebrews preserved in the fiery furnace.

4. Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a great tree that foreshadows his madness.

5. Belshazzar's feast.

6. Daniel in the lions' den.

Prophetic Section

7. Daniel's vision of the four beasts coming out of the sea. The gift of the everlasting Kingdom to the Son of man.

8. Vision of the ram with two horns (Media and Persia) overcome by the he goat (Greece). The latter's horn is broken and from it come four horns and a little horn that waxed great (a fierce, tyrannical king generally supposed to be Antiochus Epiphanes).

9. Daniel remembers the seventy years of exile prophesied by Jeremiah, and prays for his people, and Gabriel tells him what must come to pass before the Messiah come.

10–12. A vision concerning Persia and Greece to the times of Antiochus Epiphanes.

Concerning the detailed interpretation of these dreams and visions, there is a great diversity of opinion. In the great image of chapter two, Daniel tells us the head of gold represents Babylonia. Modern scholarship agrees pretty well that the next three are the Medes, the Persians and the Greeks. The traditional view differs in that the Medo-Persian is named as the first and the Romans as the last of the three unnamed Kingdoms.

The dominant idea of the whole Book is seen in the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, that smote and destroyed the image. What a fitting emblem! Firm in structure, it crushed the softest material, but retaining its original unity it grew to a vast mountain that filled the whole earth. Separate and distinct from the image and cut without hands from the unhewn rock show that its different nature and origin plainly forecasts a Kingdom irresistible and everlasting.

In this Book is shown a comparison between the powers of earthly kingdoms and those of the everlasting Kingdom, under the many phases of human life. The intellects of the four young Hebrew captives outshine those of the Magi. The three worshippers of Jehovah were preserved in the fire, but the idolaters who cast them in were slain with the heat. The power of God's Kingdom to give peace is seen in Daniel's sleeping in a den of lions, as contrasted with the restless king in his palace. Nebuchadnezzar boasts to himself of "the great Babylon I have built." He is touched by an unseen force and "eats grass like an ox." Belshazzar profanes the sacred vessels used as types of the everlasting Kingdom, and "his knees smote one against another" at the handwriting on the wall.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

There are in the Book two fourfold divisions of history presented; one in chapter two and one in chapter eleven. In each case there succeeds the Kingdom of the Christ in His reign as the "Son of man." In no preceding Book is the Messiah ascribed such unlimited power. "I beheld till the thrones were cast down and the Ancient of days did sit." Then seeming to catch a vision of the general judgment, "ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened." In remarkable apocalypse the prophet continues: "Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, etc." (7:9–13).

To other prophets, the salvation of men depended on the preservation of Judah, or the remnant. With the blaze of Solomon's throne no "titles clear" could be read except in its light; and when that failed, Jerusalem became darker by the contrast of the glory of the mighty empire. If true to the pledges of Jehovah through the seers of the past, the Messiah must not be robbed of His glory. He must no longer be the King of the little sub-province of Judah, but of the world. To other prophets He may have been the "Son of David," to Daniel He is the "Son of Man." It takes not the seed of Jacob, but of mankind, to fill his prophetic horizon. Here "the Messiah is taught with greater distinctness and in a more developed form," than in any other Old Testament Book. Brought before the Ancient of days, He is clothed with a universal and eternal power, and brings in subjection all the World Kingdom; and ascending in the clouds of glory as if to sit on the throne of the general judgment.

In the words: "Seventy weeks are determined to bring in everlasting righteousness" (9:24), some think the exact time of the Messiah is given. Seventy periods of seven years each are counted, making four hundred and ninety years from the decree of Cyrus, 455 B. C., to the crucifixion of Christ, A. D. 33. More remarkable is the forecast in verse twenty-six, of the death of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off; but not for himself and the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary."

In the opening vision of the wonderful drama of Revelation, reappears Daniel's perfected conception of the Messiah. The Ancient of days with the "Son of Man" (Lamb) is on the throne; and round about, four and twenty other thrones (not seats) for representatives of the redeemed Church. The Prince is no longer cut off from His throne or His people; no longer standing amidst the wreck of the world powers, but He mounts the throne faintly hinted at in Daniel's vision.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

The date and authorship of the Book have in recent years provoked much discussion. The traditional view that it was written by Daniel in Babylon, claims the first six chapters as simple history and the predictive portion, especially that referring to Antiochus Epiphanes, as a miracle of foreknowledge. Modern scholarship seems inclined, however, to accept the view that the Book was written by a Jew living in the time of the Maccabees. The decision, however, should turn neither on the elimination of the predictive element in Old Testament prophecy nor such a reverence for tradition as to refuse a candid investigation of all the questions involved.

While I, of course, cannot take the space to give adequately the arguments pro or con, I would have you bear in mind that, though the latter view be taken, the late date need not affect the supposition that the author recites true traditions of Daniel; that the moral and religious value of the Book and its promise of Christ must remain; that though we hold to the traditional view we need not designate our opposers as "those who charge the author with forgery," until we study closely the literary methods of the ancient world; and lastly that the Book still contains genuine predictions, and every feature of inspired prophecy. Allow me to add that, in a true sense, the Book is anonymous, and even such a statement as 12:4, standing in literature, cast in such a form of the apocalypse, cannot be used as conclusive argument for Daniel's authorship. Allow me, therefore, to insist that we need not be alarmed by this discussion, ás it in no way affects the genuineness of the external truth it contains nor the worthiness of its place in the canon.

As Orelli well says: "The Book of Daniel, whatever the conjectures respecting its origin, puts the crown on Old Testament prophecy, giving utterance with unequaled grandeur to ideas of the divine Kingdom which entered into the basis of the revelation of the New Covenant." Some of the unique features of the Book are: its almost even balance, with sharp division between narration and prophecy; its apocalyptic element approached by the closing chapters of Ezekiel and copied and continued in the Book of Revelation; and the first attempt to draw a theology from the dealing of Jehovah with the great world powers, and a philosophy from the events of the world.

All earthly kingdoms are seen to be overruled by a divine Providence for the welfare of the everlasting Kingdom. In no other Book of the Old Testament are angels mentioned by names, and distinctions made in their dignities, and used as God's agents to carry out His will in the earth; and it seems, too, they acted as protectors of special nations. For the first time in Scripture, we meet with a distinct mention of the resurrection of the individual dead, "some to everlasting life" and "some to everlasting contempt."

The Book of Daniel marks a new era of enlightenment for the Jews. From the destiny of the Jewish nation our author seems lifted up to a higher plane and takes a broad survey of the course of empires. The horizon is greatly widened and there dawns a new interest in the destiny of humanity.

As to the style, the author has not the rapt passion of Isaiah, nor the pathetic tenderness of Jeremiah, nor the lyrical beauty of the Psalms; but he does have a certain oratorical stateliness belonging to none of the other three.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

The God of this Book is a God of all nations; pure, just, righteous, omnipotent and omniscient. New emphasis is given the promise that "all things work together for good to them that love the Lord." For this, he rules over kings and nations and uses the ministry of angels, and, when necessary, interposes miracles.

It teaches how by separation from sin, we gain the purity that means strength in every department of life. "He would not defile himself," and Daniel's integrity and his true allegiance to God result in a marked physical improvement, a clearness of intellect, as shown in the interpretation of the dream; and his spiritual power as shown in his ability to rely on the omnipotent hand of Jehovah to protect him in a lion's den; and the omnipotent wisdom of God in the clearer vision of Jeremiah's seventy weeks, etc.

Knowing these attributes of God, and his own love and trust, what was left for Daniel to fear? These prophecies (as all others) had as an immediate purpose, to give comfort to those despairing in exile; or, as seems quite possible, to those suffering the bloody persecutions of Antiochus IV. It is an illustration of the severest test of Jehovah's power and love pledged to the protection of His children. The many rich and real lessons of the Book have found, not only accord in the consciousness of the religious world in every epoch since, but also Christ Himself makes recognition of it and uses it for His immediate age, and sends it like lines of light into the future.

XXII

HOSEA

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

THE main idea of this Book is well expressed in chapter four: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel; for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth nor mercy, nor knowledge of God, in the land." Hosea's truth is fundamental and spiritual, and his mercy tender and beautiful.

He had a tragedy in his own home. His great love was spurned by a wife untrue to her marriage vow. She followed evil men into sin, and this great-souled man finds her at last in the slave market. In this sad experience, he not only sees but also feels the sorrow of outraged love. This causes him to lay such frequent stress on Israel's ignorance of the character of Jehovah. We see how, in a sense, the heart of God and the heart of Hosea beat in a common sympathy. For the lack of knowledge of our prophet's rich nature and so a proper appreciation of his love, Gomer goes down the path of sin and death. For this reason Israel leaves God. Hence we hear the heart-cry: "My people perish for lack of knowledge" (4:6).

Hosea's conception of repentance was found in the Greek word used in the New Testament meaning a "change of mind" or "change of knowledge." Note how Hosea gives the history of sin and its cure. The cause of sin: "they have not known the Lord"; the result of sin: "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I have rejected thee"; forgiveness: "they knew not that I healed them"; adoption: "I will betroth thee to me and thou shalt know the Lord"; assurance: "Israel shall cry, My God, we know thee." The Hebrew word translated "to know" in the Old Testament, covers a broad field and is expressed in the English by a long list of words such as to "be aware of," "to hold communion with," "to be convicted of," to "experience," etc. Hosea's use of the word is close kin to our word "conscience," and points out a plain road to a throne of mercy. In this spiritual use of the term he is unique among the prophets. For this and the general tone of his messages he deserves to be called St. John, the evangelist of the Old Testament.

In chapter four he shows his people how sin clouds the mind and paralyzes the powers to grasp spiritual truth, and pronounces woe on the priests who have "rejected knowledge." "Like priests," says he, "like people." While Hosea surpasses the other prophets in rehearsals of Israel's history, he shows them that God's purpose in it all was to make the nation know Him. To know God in history is the only means of knowing Him in experience. His emphasis is put on God's goodness, and he is strangely silent concerning the great miracles, such as the passage over the Red Sea, the smoking mount and the fall of Jericho. The great miracle to Hosea is God Himself and the revelation of His character.

The declarations of Amos are like the trump of doom; those of Hosea like an elegy of a broken heart. It is a wail of wounded love that looks to a day of healing. The boundary line of religious ecstasy is so dangerously near the sensual passions that Hosea rises superior to it, and he does great service to those prophets coming after him, by emphasis of the moral and the intellectual side of religion. "The prophet is a fool, the man of the spirit is mad" (9:7).

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

Here is the romance that elicits the wonder of our prophet: Assyria, the great world giant, unsheathes his sword and strikes a staggering blow at the nations round, and mounts his throne of power to dictate to the world. Jeweled Egypt, gorgeous in the riches of oriental splendour, is ablaze with the glory of a civilization the world had never known.

Marvelous in the eyes of Hosea, it was, that God passed by them both to find the herald of His grace to humanity in a people that was not a nation, but in different epochs the slave of each to the other two. "He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king" (11:5). Reaching back for a history of God's "goodness," he applies it to the present and hurls it like lines of light into the future. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him and called my son out of Egypt" (11:1).

The prophet sees the mighty God passing through the earth. He sees Him stop in tender compassion before the little slave child in Egypt, and, more beautiful yet, God becomes a Father and takes the child in adoption to His great loving heart. God's covenant with Israel and His development of them as His people, foreshadows the more perfect union of God and man in the person of the Son of God. And in this sense do we find the fulfillment as given in Matthew 2:15: "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." So that Egypt became the cradle of both the Old Testament and the New Testament Church.

While Hosea's conception of the Messianic day is interior and spiritual, he seems to have lingering dreams of the monarchy, and sees the people returning "unto David the King." Unceasingly, Hosea insists that love to be perfected must become reciprocal. Such is the love that is to be the "Holy of Holies," and the crown of the Messianic salvation. To him in that day will be a beautiful love covenant of marriage between the Lord and His bride, the faithful remnant.

Hosea saw that the present body of the theocracy must go down to the grave, but to it is the promise, "In the third day he will raise us up" (6:2). This was Christ's allusion to the temple in John 2:19. He does not refer in the first instance to the human body, but to the temple so far as it embodies the Old Testament Church. Consistent with this is the inspired interpretation: "He said this of the temple of his body." Here is seen the close identity of the body of Christ and the Church of God. Christ is the fulfillment of the old theocracy and when they slew Him they destroyed their own temple and slew their own nation. Christ did "arise the third day"; and thus we have the literal fulfillment of Hosea's prediction.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

In point of time, Hosea's prophecy is over two hundred years earlier than Daniel. He prophesied in Samaria, the capital of the Northern kingdom, during the earlier period of Isaiah's prophecy in Jerusalem. In our English Bible, Hosea is given first in order of the twelve "minor prophets"; called so not because of their inferiority in anything but length. Jeroboam II was king of the ten tribes, or Samaria, called Israel now in distinction from Judah, and by Hosea called Ephraim from the most distinguished of the tribes.

To all outward appearances, there was great prosperity; but our prophet had a peculiar genius for seeing beneath the surface of things, and this Book shows the nation rotten at the heart. He arraigns the kings for murder and profligacy, the priests for ignorance and dissipation, and the nation for idolatry. At the bottom of all, however, was the reiterated charge that God and His words were forgotten (4:1–6; 8:1–2, etc.).

Hosea is, in a sense, more spiritual than any of the other prophets. The tone of his messages is true to the meaning of his name "Salvation," from which we get the name Jesus. He constantly discounts the ceremonial and emphasizes the ethical and spiritual. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of his prophecy is the use of the word "mercy" (R. V. "goodness"), which is nearer the meaning of love than any other in Old Testament terms. According to him, love carries with it its own penalty, and even in the utterance of brooding tenderness we hear the undertone of love outraged that threatens to break in fury over the head of the ungrateful nation. Judgment standing so near to mercy seems more terrible by the very contrast; while in mercy and love there is a tender, beautiful glow seen in the writings of no other prophet. Like the delicate loveliness of the rainbow that both proclaims the storm and heralds the light, so is the relation of judgment and mercy in this Book.

Hosea's domestic life is deeply written in his prophecy. God did not order him to marry an adulterous woman that he might illustrate the sin of idolatry to the nation; but the prophet gave what he believed to be a chaste woman his whole heart of love, and sealed it with the sacred estate of marriage. His great love was spurned and rejected, and adulterous children were born in his household; and when she fled, he found her and bought her in the slave market and she who forfeited her right to the holy place of wife, like the prodigal, now only asks to be made as an "hired servant." If you listen with your heart, you may hear, marvelous to say, in accord with a threatening indignation, the sobs of a love spurned and rejected. Hear in these expressions scattered throughout this Book the experiences of his own home and heart: "I will betroth thee unto me forever"; "Woe unto them for they have fled and gone from me"; "They have sown the wind"; "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself"; "I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away"; "I will ransom them"; "Come, let us return unto the Lord." The sting is not felt on the cheek of the mother struck by the ungrateful son, but the blow breaks her loving heart. So in Israel's rebuff of God, who chastens for the love He bears, our loving Father suffers spiritual anguish.

To all the prophets coming after him, Hosea becomes the school of grace. He is the high priest, who bought with the price of a great sorrow the right to enter "the holy of holies" of motive and character, and through the other prophets to all humanity, he gives new meaning to both law and love. Perhaps he is most unique in showing the relation existing between the two. While his law is as stern and his morality as high and real as that of Amos, his story of love is told in the power and tenderness of Jeremiah. Amos sat in the world's watch-tower and saw the nations and classes of humanity pass; Hosea, from the inner shrine of the home, portrayed sin in its shame and final result in full view of a goal of hope. In especially this regard, is this "the beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea" (1:2).

Misery, grace, and guilt are each taught from an altogether new standpoint. Sinning against the law is kicking against the goads, but sinning against love is the murder of the power that redeems us. The new and final lesson of repentance here given is improved on by no teacher between him and us. It is his knowledge of God that gives insight to his righteousness so consistent with his grace and thus makes full and rich his conception of repentance. Like the stars that come out at night, so from the bitter experience of home life, into the dark sky of Hosea's sorrow, come these stars or rather, let us say, this star that ever guides the wise to the birthplace of Him so "full of grace and truth."

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

Now let us ask whether there is a practical lesson for us in the prophecy. "Ephraim he hath mixed (allowed himself to be poured out) among the people; Ephraim is a cake unturned." These two epigrams strikingly state the political, social and religious condition of Hosea's time.

All the inspired prophets of the exile give God's constant warning that they keep pure and strong at heart, and send out rich red blood to the whole corporate life of the nation. They did not heed the warning; they cut the sorry figure of attempting to play politics at the courts of Egypt and Assyria. They sought protection everywhere but in purity of heart and the favour of Jehovah. It matters not to what height of civilization and earthly glory a nation may attain, if it opens the door for vice and has no sense of God, " Woe unto them." Like Rome and Greece and Egypt they must fail. Ephraim, under the reign of the powerful Jeroboam, looked " on the outward appearance," and imagined themselves strong. Hosea looks on the heart and says: " Strangers have devoured his strength and he knoweth it not." With a sharp wit and stinging sarcasm he said, " Ephraim is a cake unturned."

Religion and wealth and culture are very unequally distributed. The favoured and unscrupulous have grown very rich, so that one side of the cake is nicely cooked but the other is raw. It lacks sincerity, thoroughness, unity. It needs a theocracy in a true spiritual sense; not in the sense, however, in which Israel had too long indulged. At this point he gives utterance to one of his great declarations that is a key verse to the message of the Book: " For I desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings " (6:6). The question is not, " What shall I do to inherit eternal life? " but " What shall I be? "

The priest and the Levite were so busy with religion that they neglected the weightier things of mercy, closed their hearts against the spiritual knowledge of God, and " passed by on the other side." Throughout human history, epochs have come when formalism has been substituted for the spirit and the means have been taken for the end; then God sends a Hosea or a Luther to turn the warm breath of a heavenly spirit on the frozen ritualism of the Church and, lo, the sweet, glad song of triumph, " My God we know thee."

XXIII

JOEL

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

JOEL was prophet of Judah and an inhabitant of Jerusalem. In this Book there are three discourses, and in our English Bibles only three chapters. The much mooted question is, whether the plague of locusts, which gives occasion of the prophecy, is to be taken literally or figuratively. The tendency of modern scholarship is toward the acceptance of the locusts as a literal scourge of the land. The fact is, those who take the opposite side have many difficulties to explain. Many parts of the description seem greatly exaggerated; however, if taken literally, he would make us to see that he held in his mind the images of judgments as being more fearful than the locusts. Under the forms of the Apocalypse, he uses the plague of the locusts as an ominous sign of the Day of Jehovah.

The controlling idea of Joel's religious thought is the visitation of God's judgment; and every great national calamity was thus interpreted. This plague is one sign, but many more will follow. "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord" (2:31). Natural phenomena, God's judgments, and human history are thus brought into very close relationship. These heralds of the final judgment are found in Matthew 24, and Revelation 6:12. Christ's description of this terrible day so closely relates the destruction of Jerusalem with the end of the world that it is difficult to distinguish between them.

This terrible judgment, like an electric storm, purifies the air. The storm is hushed and copious showers of blessing fall on the parched earth. "And I will pour

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out my spirit upon all flesh" (2:28). Then into the vision of the prophet comes the commingling of fire and blood and smoke. The earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark and the "stars withdraw their shining." Another surcease of judgment and a message of assurance to "the remnant," and the Book closes with an apocalypse of the last stand of Jehovah and His people against the enemies of the Church. He triumphs over them; and Judah, through her cleansing, becomes the everlasting dwelling place of the Most High. "For the Lord dwelleth in Zion."

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

In the prophet's conception two mighty powers run side by side; a world-power and a redemption-power. It is indeed a vision of God's purpose written in the history of humanity. If we trace the history of these two streams, we find the issue of the world-power in judgment, and the issue of the redemptive-power in salvation. Joel sees the day when judgment is finished and redemption is realized. God's people had not become simply "a nation of priests," for no mediation will be necessary for them. All became prophets in the new Church that has become the body of Christ in which the energizing spirit of God shall dwell forever.

While we find here no mention of the personal Messiah, there is given in very definite language the play of a divine power on the Church for its cleansing and completion. In the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ, this prophecy is only partially fulfilled. Joel has given us an outline in miniature of our glorious Zion, issuing from the fires of universal war, perfected in outward form, and purified in inward life. As the torn body of Christ on the Cross announced the doom of the Church of the old covenant, His resurrection prefigures the more glorious body that shall be animated by the divine spirit. So Joel turns from the old forms to greet the glory of the new.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

Joel makes no mention of the Assyrians or Babylonians, indicating that he wrote either before these nations had risen to world powers or after they had ceased to be so. The weight of recent scholarship is strongly in favour of a post-exile date for the Book.

To this prophet, of whom almost nothing is known excepting his name, is given the honour of announcing the coming of the Holy Ghost on all flesh, the final struggle of the Church and her enemies, the perpetuity of our Zion, and the great Day of Judgment. While the prophecy seems limited in the first instance to the people of the covenant, the emphasis is not placed on the limitation but on the universality within national lines. At least, the future Church is clearly distinguished from the present one. To Joel, Zion is the crowning hill of redemption, and the judgment throne of the world. The significance, however, is seen in the fact that the prophet gives no assurance of salvation solely on the ground of covenant relationship. The land must be sanctified, and the people sifted to a "remnant," who, with an inward spiritual nature, are prepared for the abode of God among them.

In this we note a marvelous progress of prophecy. The salvation from final judgment involves both the necessity of the fertilizing power of the Holy Spirit upon the nation and that each person must, in his own behalf, "call upon the name of the Lord." On the day of Pentecost Peter declared: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Not that complete fulfillment is found in the events of this particular day. The glorious era seen by our prophet is not exhausted but simply begins with every token of complete fulfillment. Hitherto men were seized upon and filled with the spirit as a preparation for a special office or duty. For the first time the Holy Spirit, like a shower of rain upon the thirsty earth, now falls upon the desert needs of Judah.

We cannot lay claim to a universal note in Joel's salvation, but the very narrowness of his enthusiasm gave him clear knowledge of the deep and spiritual needs of his own people. The spirit is to be poured out on "all flesh," but the stress is on "your sons and your daughters"; and when Peter on the day of Pentecost quoted the prophecy, his thought of its application was only for his own nation; and he awakened to the broader view, only in that wonderful vision of the clean and the unclean. His apocalypse devoted the world to destruction and, of course, such dark clouds closed out the glorious light of the world's salvation. This narrow confinement of a great soul gave intensity and vividness to his style. Deep, full and smooth is the tide of his message; and while other prophets had a broader outlook, few had a sharper insight, and none had greater moral force.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

Our God is nature's King, and that supremacy will be made manifest in the final day of judgment. If God thus rules nature, surely He has the power to carry out that greatest promise He ever made to an individual Christian: "All things work together for good to them that love the Lord." Zion's gates are open to His people and guarded by the flaming sword of His judgment; its fountains flow and its beauty smiles only for those who belong to the precious remnant and have deigned to "call upon the name of the Lord."

The Law and the Temple were placed between man and God, and these formal religious observances had made the people feel that Jehovah was far off. In this startling message they are made to see "the Judge is at the door," and the "Lord who dwelleth in Zion."

Joel does not arraign his people for any particular crime, or commend them for any particular virtues. In a great crisis of life, like Joel saw in the breaking up of nature, we stand in the immediate presence of God and feel our whole deep need of repentance.

XXIV

AMOS

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

AMOS, who was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees, was, like Hosea, commissioned to the Ten Tribes of the Northern kingdom. He was a native of Tekoa, a village about twelve miles south of Jerusalem. In this desert home he brooded over the injustice suffered by the weak at the hands of the strong, and the capital crimes and sinful luxury in Jehovah's sight until, "like a lion from the swelling of Jordan" he comes into Israel, "the habitation of the strong," and pronounces the doom under the righteous retribution of God.

The kingdom under Jeroboam II had reached its climax of worldly power. With the boldness of Elijah, Amos pierced the gloss and tinsel of outward show and revealed the weakness and decay of the heart. His prophecy is a continuation and filling out of Joel's. Unlike the latter's hope for Judah, Amos had no promise of the future for Israel; and the nature of his message is more of history than of final things. In Joel, the judgment is for the most part on the heathen; but in Amos, the storm cloud makes its round of the heathen nations as only foretokens of the retribution that should break in fury over Israel. The people, in the ease and luxury of the age, had forgotten God, and broken their relations with Him; and with the pathless deserts of his native Tekoa in his mind, he asks: "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (3:3). It would be a rare chance that they should meet without previous appointment. "Two years before the earthquake," the people of Israel felt a security in the strength of the earth's foundation, and, least of all, did they recognize the inward and moral decay that prophesied with certainty a sin-avenging justice.

Preliminary judgments fall upon Damascus, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon and Moab. "The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the inhabitants of the shepherds shall mourn." This is the bold figure with which the shepherd of Tekoa opens his prophecy of woes. The special threats begin in chapter three. "Will a lion roar in the forest when he hath no prey?" he asks. In his shepherd life he had learned to heed every noise as ominous of danger. "Can you not read," he means to say, "in the destruction of heathen nations, your own moral decay, and in the cry of God's prophet the sure signs of coming doom?" Then in chapter four he shows that since the former visitations of God had no effect, judgment must come. Then comes his attack of their gorgeous ritual as a substitute for simple justice and civic purity; and uttered woes on them "that are at ease in Zion"; and the prophecy of an unknown power that will bring desolation to the land. In the Messianic hope of chapter nine, this dark cloud has its bright fringe. Thus our prophet confirms Joel's prophecy of judgment which Israel had begun to doubt, and extends it in accord with the changed conditions of the times.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

In the closing chapter, Amos executes his commission to foretell the glad day of the Messianic kingdom: "I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord." The prophet sits with Jehovah to witness the sifting and purifying processes among the nations, and heralds the coming forth of the nation, more glorious with God's blessing than ever before. To show the marvelous fruitage of the land, he says: "The plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed." Thus he sees the endless harvest, the restoration of the destroyed cities, and David's kingdom.

"In that day I will raise up the tabernacle (cottage) of David that is fallen." Thus Amos sees the day of restoration under the local and political limitations, like Obadiah and Joel. The emphasis is placed upon the fact that the divine promise given to David cannot fail.

He does not mention any particular person as the hope and salvation of the people, but his vision is touched with the genial light of Him who gave invitation to all the "ends of the earth." "That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this" (9:12). The apostle James after the coming of Israel's Hope contended for the promise to the Gentiles, and quoted this passage to sustain the contention (Acts 15:16).

These elder prophets strikingly fill to completion the divine purposes. Joel announces the outpouring of the spirit, Hosea the kingdom of love, and Amos a door to the Gentiles.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

The judgments announced in the Book are twofold in nature, physical and political. First came famine, drought, blight, locusts, and earthquakes; then came war, defeat, invasion and captivity. In this we see the history of God's revelation to the prophet as to the nation. The veil was closely drawn on the future political judgments until all the physical ones were exhausted. The manifestation of God's purposes toward humanity has been gradual and progressive. At the first, the blessings of the physical were tokens of God's favour, and on and on and up and up go the soul of humanity and the expression of God through the dark into the dawn and to the revelation of Christ at the well: "God is a spirit," but with this came also the revelation of man who "must worship him in spirit."

Measured in this way, the prophets of that age mark great progress over those of former times. Living in a desert, our prophet was only an onlooker and not a citizen of the nation against which he hurled his judgments. This, perhaps, accounts for his sad lack of patriotism; and while in the announcement of these woes we hear no sob in his voice, perhaps on account of this disinterested and unprejudiced condition of mind, his indignation was the greater when he saw the oppression of the individual poor by the conscienceless rich. Hosea's love continued with his justice. Hosea may have been the better prophet; Amos was the better witness. Jehovah, till now, had been a national God and stood pledged to defend the political interest of Israel, irrespective of the latter's moral condition. The distinct contribution of Amos is the revelation of the absolute righteousness of Jehovah. His doctrine is that "God has no respect of persons"; in fact God and righteousness are identical. "Seek the Lord and ye shall live," says he, in 5:6; then in 5:14, "Seek good and ye shall live."

Furthermore he is the first to announce the nation's destruction and to give as the cause the decay of moral life. His religion was controlled by an unseen and Personal Presence that seemed to dim his vision of a dead ceremonial law, but to break, like flame, from his message of the fundamental verities of a living Jehovah. "I hate, I despise your feast days; though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them" (5:21–22). Like Elijah and John the Baptist he comes from the desert, and like them, under the command of his God, he dares to face a mocking multitude and dauntlessly to lift the gilded top from the seething wickedness of the influential in the palaces of the rich. He fearlessly arraigns them that "store up violence and robbery in their palaces."

Here began a new order of prophecy. Equity to men is better than sacrifice to God. Ethical laws are for the first time written for the direction of religious life. The new discovery of God in His moral character is also seen in his conception of the Day of Jehovah. This is a day of searching judgment and not, as traditionally held, a day of national aggrandizement (5:18). The environment of this nomad of the desert prepared him to give without bias to religious forms his religion of the social relations of men and his conceptions of God, that were never improved on by any prophet after him; and are as true for application to this age as to the people to whom the message was given. It was his facing of facts and his marvelous genius in applying them to history and character that clearly distinguished him from other prophets.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

The rather humble occupation of Amos did not prevent a call from God to the high office of a prophet. "Man looketh on the outward part, but God looketh on the heart." Titles and worldly honours sometimes decorate a wicked heart. The mighty are often rejected and the lowly chosen by our God in the great crises of national and religious life. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." Then I note that it is a busy man that is chosen. Elisha went from his plow; Gideon from his threshing floor; and David and Amos from the flock, into the high and holy office of priests and vicars of God. So, centuries later, the humble shepherds of the hills of Bethlehem, and not the priests of Jerusalem or the titled officers of Cæsarea, hear the heavenly music that calls them to the birth of "the Lord of Lords."

He seemed to anticipate modern pragmatism, and while he sounded deep depths of theology he was intensely practical. Injustice between man and man strikes at the very foundations of society. Elaborate worship is an insult to God, if offered by him who is unjust to his fellow men.

Another message of Amos is, that responsibility must measure with our privilege and light. "Where much is given much is required," and furthermore, signal punishment follows a refusal to recognize that responsibility. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Amos was a sane, well-balanced man, who denied that he was one of the professional prophets of his day. They held loose rein to emotions and were wrought up into a state of morbid ecstasy. "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son," says he. Or says one of the later prophets, the "prophet is mad." He kept an open ear and a quick conscience; and that solitary life in the desert air must have sharpened his perception of facts as related to real life. His call has the ring of genuineness in it. He has no strange experience of excitement and trance to tell, but a definite impulse and touch of the divine hand. "Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy." It is the temptation of the Evil One that deludes some souls to remain in the desert place, hushing from their consciences the plain call to duty, and waiting for some emotional ecstatic experience. Such an attitude has in it a self-indulgent spirit that God can never use.

If Amos found God in all the facts of common life, he had a clear vision of the absolute sovereignty of God. A lack of this consciousness is one of the fruitful, unuttered sins of our age. Men live as if God would look upon sin with allowance. "Be sure your sins will find you out." As our prophet strikingly puts it: "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into a house, and leaned on a wall, and a serpent bit him" (5:19). Let us make one exception; for a "fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Amos prayed the Lord, and the plague of the grasshoppers and that of the fire were averted. Presumably the people met the conditions of repentance and faith and, for the time at least, heeded the call of Amos: "Seek the Lord, and ye shall live."

XXV

OBADIAH

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

ABSOLUTELY nothing is known of the personal history of Obadiah, the author of this the shortest Book in the Old Testament. The introductory word gives the purpose of the message: "Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom." Jacob and Esau were twins and a prophecy of their future contention was given at their birth. Israel sprang from Jacob and Edom from Esau. No hate is so fierce as that between brothers. At the time of Jerusalem's greatest distress, Edom enters into sympathy with enemies of the holy city with malicious joy. As Amos says of Edom: "He cast off all pity; and he kept his wrath for ever" (1:11).

At the southeastern border of Judah and of the Dead Sea, there jut out into the desert great mountains of masonry in porphyry and red sandstone. Protected by narrow defiles and hidden by the shelving rocks, are perched, like eagle nests, these mountain homes of the Edomites. "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." Israel had the consciousness of a heaven-directed destiny, and Edom dwelt in the mountain gorge protected; and rich in water, figs, grapes, and oleanders. We easily see how the first felt the pride in the peculiar blessings of God, and the second felt pride in their isolation and self-sufficiency.

Since the days of Moses, when the Israelites were refused passage through Mount Seir, and especially since the conquest of Edom by David, through a thousand years, the hatred of each generation deepened until it rankled in every Idumæan heart, and flashed fire in every Jewish eye. It was with an "sha and an sha" that Edom gloated over the ruin of Israel; but with a relish akin to glee, does our prophet class Edom with the heathen, and pronounce the judgment: "As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee" (15). Edom shall be the stubble and Israel and Judah the fire and flame; and they "shall be in them and devour them." Of all the prophets, Obadiah has allotted to him the shortest space in divine revelation, and yet he chooses to use it all for the pronouncement of Jehovah's doom upon Edom. He first announces the latter's punishment (1–9), then specifies her guilt (10–14), then identifies her with the heathen (15–16), and lastly, contrasts her with the exaltation of Israel in the great Day of the Lord.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

Short and crisp as is this message, suffused with indignation and dark with revengeful resentment as it is, a holy joy lights at the close. "But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness." While salvation is to issue from Mount Zion, two things must be said of this Kingdom of that Day. It will be both universal and spiritual. He calls by name the nations, representative of the Gentile world, that will commingle with the happy house of Jacob and Joseph. Neither is it to be a political salvation, but a reign of "holiness" (17).

The forms under which he prophesies the Messianic day are chosen from the period of the Judges: "And saviours shall come upon Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Esau" (21). While the prophet had the historic horizon of that long-gone period when "The Lord raised up judges (saviours) to deliver them," the important word is the last one in this little book: "And the kingdom shall be the Lord's." Zion is to be the temple-mountain where the divine Priest is to "enter" for all the world. The divine seat is narrow but the divine sway is universal.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

The time of this Book has been a bitterly contested question among Bible critics. Does the day of Jerusalem's calamity described refer to the captivity under Nebuchadnezzar, 586 B. C.? The question is further complicated from the literary proof of Jeremiah's having copied from Obadiah. Now the former wrote in 605 B. C., and we think the obvious answer is, that both copied from a common and anonymous oracle. Jeremiah borrowed freely from the other prophets, and in the matter of originality between the two, the latter would undoubtedly suffer by the comparison.

As we have elsewhere shown, in the religious history of humanity, we find a world-power and a redemptive-power. Between these two, there can be no sympathy, and Israel has ever fulfilled God's purpose for her in the world through antipathies. More brutal, constant, and relentless than any other had been the hate of Edom. In everything that makes or mars a nation, these two peoples represent extremes. Israel was a people with capacity for visions, and recognized the truth that, "That which is unseen is eternal." The birthright does not satisfy the immediate desires and lusts of the flesh, and Esau "sold his birthright" for a mess of pottage. There are two things that are fatal to the realization of God's plan for any people. They are impurity and godlessness. Esau had both. As the author of the Book of Hebrews calls Esau a "fornicator" and "profane person," Edom was a nation of atheism. So far as we know, they had no gods, and thus presented sharp contrast to the nation that saw religious significance in every event of their national life.

Israel, enriched by the open window toward Jerusalem, honoured with a message of spiritual life for the race, given visions of an eternal kingdom of love, truth and mercy; and vision to pierce the curtain of this sight world, is mocked by the heartless, godless Edom. In the darkest hours of the holy nation, when those windows seemed closed and Jehovah's purpose for the world's salvation seemed thwarted by the house of Esau, do you wonder that the prophet's heart grew hot? Can you see nothing in his message but passionate revenge?

Obadiah's indignation boiled, also, at those of his own nation who had sought for hidden gold in Esau (6). Furthermore, all peoples who war against Zion and that for which it stands must suffer the same fate as Edom (15). The special contribution then to the revelation of God's Kingdom, as to its nature and purpose in the world, was not only that it was to be spiritual and universal, but also necessary to the salvation of the race. Could the power of natural sagacity have foreseen that the Edomites, lusty and strong long after Israel was laid waste, would literally be devoured like "stubble" by "fire," in the time of the Maccabees? More remarkable still that this now prostrate nation should be the "fire."

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

The Book draws the most vital distinction between "the things of this world" and the "eternal verities"; between the godly and the worldling. The first walks by faith and the last by sight. Jacob has feeling and heart, and while he has many faults, he prays and yearns for the enrichment of the inner life. Esau's birthright gives him the high privilege of God's altar where he may dream dreams and see visions, but he catches a whiff of the "morsel of meat," the temptation for immediate indulgence of the flesh, which he failed to withstand. He sold his birthright. He spurned the soul-life and chose the flesh-life. "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:8).

Just one more lesson. A sure index to character is found in the attitude shown toward a sincere person. A heartless man that will mock at things held sacred by his brother man, lacks the most essential element of manhood. The crime is heightened as the relationship between the two is closer. Deep-dyed is the crime when the brother is in deepest distress, and the cruel Esau not only does not comfort but mocks him with a demonish joy. Woe be unto that Esau! He has "offended one of God's little ones." "As thou hast done it shall be done unto thee" (15). "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you again."

XXVI

JONAH

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

AS Jehovah's messenger to Israel, Jonah seems to be the successor of Elisha. 2 Kings 14:25 gives us a glimpse of his history: "According to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher." The Book is given in simple narrative form. Jonah is sent to preach judgment to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and flees to Joppa to take ship for Tarshish. The ship is overtaken by a storm, and Jonah is thrown into the sea at his own request, and is swallowed by a great fish, where he remains three days; and God hears his prayer and delivers him. He then goes to Nineveh; they hear the message and repent; God spares them, and Jonah grows angry and longs for death.

All mention of the prophet himself is omitted except what bears directly on the above recounted mission to Nineveh. Whether the teaching is by parable or history, the main purpose is to point Israel to their high destiny of Jehovah's heralds of salvation to the whole heathen world. Divine grace is not circumscribed by the boundary line of the nation of Abraham, and the God of revelation lights again the sky of expectancy of the glad Messianic Day, when the kingdom of grace shall extend to the uttermost parts of the earth. Whatever may be the time of the Book, whoever may be the author, and whatever may be its literary character, one divine purpose dominates the whole Book.

The prophecy is of the foreign missionary idea that will be developed in all its glorious fulness in Christianity, whose marching order in the great commission will be the dynamic, explosive word "Go." When the Lord said "Go," to Jonah, how different from the "go" in the mouth of Judaism! The first was heaven-born, the second earth-born. The first said "go" to save, the second "go" to annihilate. In the Jewish mind the millennial Day meant the exaltation of Israel and the destruction of the pagan nations.

When we consider that it is the Assyrian nation that threatens to swallow up Israel as the great fish swallows up Jonah, and note the gospel of good will shown them by Israel's God, whatever we may believe about the physical miracles recorded here, we can but bow our heads before this miracle of grace. If you refuse any but a late date for the Book, then the miracle looms larger still, for, in that event, Assyria's threat had already been carried out. Let Jonah flee where he would, he was made to face the truth. It is so with those who attempt in their interpretation of this Book to escape its supernatural elements. No Scripture has had to withstand fiercer fires of criticism, but it ever comes forth fresh and powerful to enforce the truth upon prejudiced minds. Here, indeed, is seen its main purpose; namely, "to make the blind see and the deaf hear." Prejudiced Jonah and the people of whom he is the type, must know His gracious purpose to the Gentile world. Israel is the servant chosen of God to carry out this commission. "Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger whom I have sent?" (Isa. 42:19). Hence when God said, "up and go," Jonah "rose up to flee." Not because he was afraid of Nineveh, but because while Jonah and his nation had an intense love of Israel and an intense hate of any other nation, they knew enough of the nature of God to suspect His gracious intention toward the heathen. "Therefore I fled before thee unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil" (4:2).

Where Tarshish is I do not know, and I doubt whether Jonah did. It was the synonym for that place farthest removed from Israel.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

Some, who refuse to accept Jonah's simple history, give an allegorical interpretation to the Book, and find the Messiah and the nature and purpose of His Kingdom in every minute detail. In any case we have here legitimate illustrations of Christ, which we may accept on the no less authority than Christ Himself. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:39; Luke 11:29).

The meaning seems clear, that as the miraculous preservation and deliverance of Jonah brought the Ninevites to repentance, so the resurrection of Christ from the "heart of the earth" gave the basis of belief to the thousands at Pentecost. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth," said Christ, "will draw all men unto me." Let us be careful in the study of the various opinions of the character of the Book, however, to draw the distinction between the "allegorical interpretation and the interpretation of allegory." Perhaps the great miracle at last, to the heathen sailors, was the voluntary sacrifice made by Jonah. In this great crisis he felt for the first time the obligation of a universal brotherhood, and uttered the words that come nigh to the cross of the Christ. "Take me up and cast me into the sea; so shall the sea cease from raging against you."

Israel, as a servant of Jehovah, appearing in Isaiah 50, reappears here and there in features of glorious fulfillment in Christ; here the prominent idea is the triumph at last over the obstacles to that fulfillment. In other words, Jonah here is a type of Israel, and Israel a type of Christ. "Behold, a greater than Jonah is here."

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

Those even who accept the Book as fiction, allow the historical basis. Just how broad this basis is we are not told. "No doubt the outlines of the narration are historical" (Driver). The historicity is plainly shown from traditional acceptance from the historical reference to Jonah in 2 Kings 14:25, and beyond many other considerations we might name are the references by our Lord (Matt. 12:39–41; 16:4, and Luke 11:29–30).

The author is unknown, the date uncertain, the character simple history, and the claims to inspiration as high as any other Book in the Old Testament. The unique literary feature is the fact that, while the others of the twelve minor prophets are prophetic discourses united by small threads of narration, Jonah is taken up almost entirely with the story; while the historic message is extremely brief. The most powerful method of teaching the truth is by exemplification. This Book marks an epoch in the history of Israel. Has Jehovah no purpose in her but her particular good, and no mission in her beyond her border? In every great epoch of religious history, Jehovah manifests Himself in some extraordinary manner. So here, living characters are made to walk the sacred page of holy writ that He might startle Jew and Gentile until the Jew should hear the command and the Gentile the invitation. Here indeed we find a revolutionizing thought. It is the unmistakable proclamation of God's intention to raise up a new Church out of the heathen world.

The message is not new in that God sends a prophet to the Gentiles, but in the fact that a messenger, who is a herald of judgment without mercy, is not commissioned of Jehovah. Besides the true function of the prophet, here is given clear insight to the nature of repentance and conditions of forgiveness, the reason for unfulfilled prophecy, and the utter futility of attempts to flee from God. The Book foreshadows the divine sacrifice, the miracle of the resurrection, the idea of universal brotherhood, the breaking down of the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, and a fresh revelation of the great loving heart of God in Jesus Christ, showing His pity for dumb beasts and compassion for the dumb multitude of heathen.

Just one or two precautions: Let us not allow the miraculous elements in the narration to absorb our attention to the exclusion of these great religious truths, for the sake of which the message is given. The story of Jonah and the whale has been so often perpetrated as a huge joke that many have become blind to this sunburst of a new day through the black night of Jewish prejudice, and, more important yet, God's unchangeable righteousness and love toward all men. That God spared the Ninevites after He announced their destruction does not prove that He is capricious and changeable, but it proves the opposite; namely, that judgment and love are conditional, and in those principles that are alone essential, He is ever and unalterably the same.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

The lessons are strikingly drawn, and vital in our plans for a religious conquest under the commission of our Christ. Let us ask: Have we hidden under any name or form the spirit of narrowness and bigotry of Jonah? Have we the compassion and pity shown by our Lord to the heathen sailors, the rebellious Jonah, and the pagan Ninevites? I do not ask: Are we afraid to face our unsaved enemies? for this question, as we have seen, does not enter, but the question that does enter is, whether or not we are willing to face the truth. We bitterly arraign the Jews in that far-off age, for their sinful exclusiveness, and their venomous hate toward the Ninevites, but when we speak of "Modern Missions" we include about all that has been done by the English people for the execution of our Lord's command, "Go ye into all the world." Our attitude, for instance, toward the Mohammedan world is a just parallel of the attitude of Israel toward Nineveh.

God's purpose in His peculiar care of the chosen nation was that it might become His servant to bear the message of His grace to the world. If it fails here it utterly fails. And so the only apology for the existence of the Church, and its only business in the world, is to give the light to those that sit in darkness. "To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." Too often, my friends, we are more interested in the little gourd vine of a single night's growth, because it shelters us and ours, than in the great multitude of the unevangelized, because "they are no concern of ours." Oh, that the melting love of the infinite would melt our icy indifference to the flowing point; yea, heat it to the mounting point; and that with a fresh revelation of the urgent needs of the heathen world for the Gospel, and the revelation of God's purpose in us, we may receive the recommission with joy, and go to Nineveh with our money, our prayers, and, if needs be, presenting our bodies a living sacrifice.

But there are many lessons which, while not in the main stream of purpose in the Book, are very vital to the living of a successful religious life. Jonah at the first rejected the call of God and fled from the truth, but at last offered his life for it. So men often turn from the call of God, but afterward, like Jonah, are made to "pay the fare" and go through dark agonies to the returning dawn. "The way of the transgressor is hard." So, my dear young people, shirk self-denial now if you will, but be sure the burdens of life will come after a while with compound interest. Better not go to Nineveh by way of Joppa and the whale. What utter folly to attempt to flee from the Living God! Surely, Jonah would have profited by the knowledge of David: "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me," says he. "If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even then shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me" (Psa. 139).

XXVII

MICAH

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

MICAH received the title, "the Morasthite," from the village of his nativity, situated twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem, in the country of the Philistines. He lived in the time of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, and probably Manasseh, the kings of Judah. A younger contemporary of Isaiah, he prophesied to both Judah and Israel. This humble rustic, stripped of his upper garments, suddenly appears in the streets of Jerusalem "wailing like the dragons and moaning as the owls" (1:8). Some Bible critics have attempted to tear the Book to fragments, but, as Dr. George Adam Smith truly says, recent scholars more and more "incline to believe in the genuineness of the Book as a whole." If you would understand the aim of the Book, I would have you call to mind the historic conditions described under the study of Isaiah. Amidst the corruption of the times is heard the voice of this faithful messenger of God thundering against the rapacious princes, the corrupt judges, the false prophets, the dishonest tradesmen and the fickle people.

To him, Jerusalem was the heart of sin, sending out its impure blood throughout the nation. Sins of the unrighteous rich against the poor; sins of the godless politician against the weakling; sins of the conscienceless merchant against the unsuspecting customer; not omitting sins of deluding idolatry against the living Jehovah; but with greatest emphasis on sins of the strong against the weak—all these and more are the cause of the controversy between God and man. For this our prophet arraigns the nation before the court of Jehovah's justice.

James pleads for a "pure religion and undefiled before God," and then defines this religion: "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27). Can we really believe this plea so deep and so divine as the statement of Micah in his question and answer covering the same point: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (6:8). This certainly touches the highest point of spiritual truth attained in the Old Testament.

Churchly forms and ritualistic fidelity are not the elements insisted on by Micah. None but a negative answer will suffice for the questions: "Shall I come before him with burnt offerings?" "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" (6:6–7). The social sins, the sins of the street, of the market-place and of the home elicit the deep interests of our prophet. He stands for a pure Church, but the defiled lives of the individuals can never form an undefiled Church.

Micah raises boldly his voice against those who "build up Zion with blood," and prophesies the execution of anger and fury against "graven images and sacred groves." These all defile (and other prophets so recognize), but our prophet is fired with a holy indignation at the men of evil heart who devised wickedness against their fellows. In accord with the sane, reasonable, practical religion of the Son of Man who said: "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man," Micah arraigns those with "treasures of wickedness"; "deceitful balances"; and "wicked weights"; and there can be but one answer to his question: "Shall I count them pure?" "They have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth, and the reason is given; they are full of violence" (6:10–12). They are saved from ill repute among their fellow men by their respectability, but, shrewd and sharp, they bide their time, and pounce on the unsuspecting and " flay their skin from off them." For, says he, " the best of them is as a briar; the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge" (7:4). But at last the home is the unit in a nation's building; and no social life can be pure and no national religious life undefiled unless the home be pure. No wonder Micah bewails the awful conditions; when friends cannot be trusted, wives cannot be confided in, " Son dishonoureth father, daughter riseth up against mother," and the home is found full of enemies (7: 5–6).

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

Depending on his historic horizon, his temperament, and his divine commission, each prophet has his own individual conception of the Lord's Day. Isaiah sees a mighty, spiritual David, Amos a glorious restoration, Jonah the law carried throughout the world, Ezekiel God's glory revealed, Hosea the day of tender mercy, Daniel the Son of Man and the establishment of the everlasting Kingdom, Joel the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Gentiles, in our prophet's vision, are drawn to Zion, and his Messiah will wield not a sword of conquest but a scepter of peace. Jehovah becomes the Arbitrator who will be impartial, and not giving any one nation advantage over any other, there shall come a universal peace. "And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they have war any more" (4:3).

His vision of a person is clear-cut and particular, but what makes the prophecy unique is mention of the place where the Christ " is to be born": " But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah," he declares, " from thee" shall come the " ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (5:2). It is this passage that was quoted by the chief priests and scribes when Herod asked where " Christ should be born." The passage was again quoted by His enemies when they "sought to lay hands on him" (John 7:42).

The closing phrase, "from everlasting," has been much discussed, but whether the prophet had the preëxistence and eternity of Christ in his consciousness or not matters little. We do not hang the proof of this doctrine of the "Christ, the Son of the living God" on this single passage. At least it means that since the dawn of history, He has been in the view of God, in humanity's march, and is the goal of David's house of Israel, and of the race. He has ever been the central gem in the crown of Jehovah's triumph. Micah sees the Church as the travailing mother. He sees grievous suffering through which she must go, but from the lowly town shall issue another blissful birth, and this second David, like the first, comes from the obscure Bethlehem, and builds Jerusalem for the throne of His power. Our prophet sees the suffering Servant coming through the experiences of the poor as the answering need of His time to "redeem thee," he says, "from the hand of thy foes." The Messiah was to be then a conscience for sin, a Martyr to the truth, a Redeemer of His people, and a "Peace that passeth understanding."

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

The horizon of Micah is locally more restricted than his contemporary, Isaiah's, but what he loses in breadth he gains in intensity. His space of time is brief and his people's needs are great. The people are arraigned before God in a suit at law. Jehovah made His covenant with Israel, and an oath has been "sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (7:20). The people have become apostate, all divine institutions have become corrupted, and judgment had become absolutely necessary. It is a desperate situation that requires heroic treatment. The world-power is used by Jehovah to clear the spiritual wreck and sweep the people into captivity. The raging of the electric storm is necessary to purge the air. Micah's prophecy thus becomes necessary to the completion of the Bible organism and the full prophetic development of the Messianic idea.

The name, person, and office are plainly given of One who shall usher in Salvation. He comes to Zion to establish a Kingdom not now by the aid of, but on the ruins of, the world-power (verse 5). In this we find a vision that penetrates beyond Jehovah's chastisement of the pride of Assyria to the deliverance of the people of God. The heathen nations will be overcome, not by the power of the sword but by the glory of the Lord, for "the decree shall be removed," they will seek the living God. The controversy of the third division reveals the changeless justice, the stainless purity, and, more particularly, the "sweet reasonableness" of the divine requirements. The clearness and sublimity of the prophet's ethical teaching in this division (chapters 6, 7) are unsurpassed by any of the other prophets. He plainly shows that religion is neither a thing of God's authority nor of man's emotions but a thing to be argued and settled between God and man. Man is not forced through fear or feeling into the Messianic Conqueror's Kingdom, but his freedom is respected, and reason is not barred from court. Wisdom becomes a Friend of the people, to be at last incarnated in the Son of God who gave a yet more beautiful revelation of the reasonableness of our holy religion.

While, perhaps, on account of brevity or quick change of subjects, Micah is at times obscure, his style is the blending of the poetic beauty of Isaiah and the sturdy vigour of Hosea. His language is bold and lofty in spirit, pure in diction, rich in imagery and, ever and anon, sparkles in a play upon words. His standing face to face with the facts of his days, his high courage and clear ethical insight in dealing with them, and his fiery indignation against wrong burned his messages into the "business and bosoms of men." Isaiah's "Prince of

Peace" finds a beautiful interpretation in Micah. In the ease-loving and peace-loving orientals, peace is the embodiment of the highest good.

Amos recognized the Gentiles' responsibility to God, but did not proclaim an everlasting truce to war. Micah not only proclaims peace but also announces that the Messiah Himself shall be Peace. This gives the term its spiritual aspect and proclaims not only outward but also inward peace that foreshadows Him who was to come from Bethlehem to proclaim "Peace on earth good will to men." It was He who gave the full meaning to the term. He it is that shows us how sloth and ease and false security are not peace, how the redemptive forces that flow from His divine life are to recover the outcasts of the race and make men to hear the cry of a false, a cruel, yea, a sinful peace!

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

Judgment must begin in the house of the Lord. The prophets all agree that the purpose in this judgment is to bring the people to repentance and salvation; and certainly the ultimate object always in the view of Jehovah is, through them, to save the race. Micah gives the revelation of this righteous judgment. "When I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me." Can we see in this a modern application? It is safe to say, God cannot save sinners through a people religiously defiled. It is not too much to say, God cannot save souls over the heads of graceless men and women who ceremonially hold the office of a "high vocation" and block the progress of the Kingdom.

Micah, in speaking of the captains of industry in his day, designated them as those "who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones." That is a bold figure, but bolder still he proceeds: "who also eat the flesh of my people." Go if you will into the homes of the employees of some of our modern factories and see what Micah saw. The dwellings contemptible and mean, the pictureless walls and carpetless floors and foodless cupboards are the sure marks of abject poverty. Worse yet, the gaunt figures and hollow eyes and hunted, servile expression all show them to be food for employers who live in palaces, and sport in private launches and automobiles. When one class is ground and crushed, and another at the other's expense grows fat and flourishing, is not the flesh of the one served "as from a pot" for satisfying the conscienceless greed of the other?

The cruel, selfish motto of such heartless ones is, "Look out for number one," "Business is business," etc. They merge their consciences in a corporation. They say they are in the market for labour, and that it must go on supply and demand as do other things. When men of sterling manhood, a keen sense of justice, and a heart of brotherly love see conditions like these, is it any wonder the temper is hot? Is it any wonder that at last men grow desperate and revolution comes to bring chaos and blood? The sin is the more hateful and the deeper dyed when, as in the case of the tyrants of Micah's times, this wickedness is done under the cloak of religion, and is more to be dreaded when done under the forms of law.

Our prophet sounds some of the fundamental reasons for commercial ruin. The business world runs on faith. In times of panic, after conventional pretenses have been exploded and "tricks of the trade" have been discovered, men say on every hand, "It is all caused by a loss of confidence." "Credit is the soul of commerce"; and more and more as the great national and international enterprises, where trust and credit are so necessary, increase, masks are torn away and the surer bases of business integrity and honesty are found to take the place of chicanery and intrigue that is yet all too common. But "absolute cures" and "a ground floor opportunity," and "a sure thing," still blacken with lies the advertising pages of our daily papers. The pitiless crushing of rivals, the heartless competition, and blindness to human rights are a wicked alloy of the golden rule. May God answer the prayers of the good that the Peace in Micah's vision, the peace in a broad, deep, genuine sense; peace social, ethical and spiritual; the peace of Him who is the Prince of Peace; yea, and in answer to His ascending prayer, may that peace come: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Then only shall we have the test of truth put upon the assertion of Miss Willard, "The golden rule of God will bring the golden age to man."

XXVIII

NAHUM

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

NAHUM belonged to the little village of "Elkosh" (1:1), but where that is cannot be certainly known. The prophecy, therefore, has been variously assigned as coming from Galilee, Judah and Assyria, with the burden of proof for a lost site in southern Judah. While the whole theme of the Book concerns the destruction of Nineveh, the evident and ultimate aim corresponds in a striking manner with the meaning of the name Nahum (Consolation). Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was, in the mind of Nahum, a synonym for the opposing forces of God's chosen people.

From the cuneiform inscriptions of Nineveh, recently found, we are more and more convinced that Assyria was, without doubt, the most cruel and utterly heartless empire that ever cursed the earth. Through the years this demoralizing power had insulted and crushed Judah, and held over their head the threat of utter annihilation. Is it any wonder that the long pent-up hopes of Judah's prophet catching intimations of the divine purpose toward Nineveh, should break out in an impassioned song of vengeance? Further, is it any wonder that his big, patriotic heart, fired with a zeal and a love for his people, should have no room for anything but vengeance?

The great serpent lies coiled ready for the strike; and Nahum's whole attention is drawn toward the Power about to destroy the serpent in protection of the intended victim. There is here no gleam of mercy for Assyria, no frown of reproof for Judah's sins. The one absorbing thought is the omnipotence of Jehovah, and the mighty protection and deliverance promised His people. For this reason he is exultant in his cry, "God is jealous and the Lord revengeth, the Lord revengeth and is furious" (1:2). Nineveh's cup of iniquity is full and her doom is sealed. "The Lord is slow to anger" (1:3), but the great city of over three hundred thousand population becomes weaker as it becomes greater. Like a great reservoir, it is filled to the brim with iniquity; and when the breach is made, terrible is the calamity that leaves "void and waste" in its wake (11:8–10). Nahum thus bears the good tidings of consolation to his people. "For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder" (1:13).

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

The author of the Hebrews says Moses esteemed the "reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Here Israel and Christ are made synonymous, in accordance with the Old Testament form: so Assyria, or Babylon, is the form of the world power, or Antichrist. Jerusalem received with rapturous joy the fall of Assyria. She had not been able to keep the solemn feasts without trembling in fear of this foe, so overwhelming in power and so cruel in spirit. "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace" (1:15). The prophecy of Isaiah (52:7) is almost the same, and applies to the "servants of Jehovah," or the Messiah. Paul quotes the passage and applies it to the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles (Rom. 10:15). This herald announces the good news that the opponents of Jerusalem shall be destroyed, and to the feasts of joy all are invited, "For there is no difference between Jew and Greek" (Rom. 10:12). So that the Messianic thought is given in this Book in a negative and general way only, and more fully developed by John in the Book of Revelation.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

Within certain limits, the time of this prophecy is easily set. Nineveh was still standing; therefore the latest limit was 606 B. C., the date of that city's fall. The city of Thebes is mentioned as having been captured, and the prophecy could not have been earlier than the date of the latter's capture, 665 B. C.

The periods of development between the world power and the Messianic power is shown by the prophet under four general heads; namely, That in which the world is the neighbouring nations: Assyria; Babylonia; the Universal (Eschatological). What we might call the Assyrian cycle is developed by Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, closing with Nahum. There is both similarity and contrast between our prophet and Jonah; for while each prophesies judgment against Nineveh, in Nahum no clemency is shown; in Jonah mercy is extended on the ground of repentance. In historical development, as in other aspects, our prophet is strikingly original, and has supplied to other prophets nuggets of ore for further developments.

In dignity and force he approaches most nearly to Isaiah, and in the opening solemnity and sustained sublimity, this remarkable little poem is unsurpassed even by that prince of prophets. Besides his picturesque beauty and rushing energy, the prophet has a most impassioned style; and when we note his white heat, and lightning changes of objects addressed, we are amazed at the unbroken flow of rhythmic beauty, and especially the preservation, continued connection, and beautiful consistency of thought. While the text is not in the best condition, his vividness of style overcomes, for the most part, these obscurities. This prophet of original diction, matchless images, daring spirit and tender pathos, who nears the goal of his hope with a mighty rush of movement, is certainly a fitting climax of this Assyrian period. Fulfillment, literal and terrible, came in 606 B. C., and so utterly was Nineveh destroyed that for ages the very site was forgotten. Henceforth the Chaldean Kingdom, with capital at Babylon, becomes the opposing world power.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

The truth is here given, that any kingdom built on brutality and force must finally and inevitably fail. Nahum says Nineveh was a "bloody city" and "full of lies and robbery." He describes her under the form of lions filling their dens with prey. It was wholly selfish, and merciless. He who can read the laws of death, and knows the history of the dealings of the righteous Jehovah with the cities and nations of the past, will find no exception in the destruction of Nineveh and no abrogation of that changeless law.

Does the rule not apply to ill-gotten gains, and wicked treasures? To be a little more explicit, does it not apply to the whisky traffic, and to that "blood money" coined from the life of our sons and the happiness and virtue of our daughters? Thanks to the great awakening, this government could keep no longer her self-respect and be responsible for the destruction of her citizens and the wreck of her homes through the licensed saloon. Do we find a modern instance of a business like the "lion that tears in pieces enough for his whelps"? Woe be to that man who says "the people be damned," and continues to "fill his hole with prey and his den with ravin" (2:12). "The Lord is slow to anger," but He will not hold His anger for ever. He has a program, and woe be to them that stand in the way of its execution.

God is no respecter of persons. Over six hundred years pass away and this scene is reënacted in Jerusalem herself. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee,—how often would I have gathered thee together like a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." The Ninevites repented under Jonah and were saved; but they went back to wickedness, and now the same sad words apply to her that apply to Jerusalem, "but ye would not."

XXIX

HABAKKUK

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

THE only hints concerning the personality of the prophet are given in the Book itself. "The prophet" seems to indicate his influence, and "on my stringed instruments" (3:19), that he was a member of the temple choir, and belonged to the tribe of Levi. But even this knowledge is both slight and doubtful. The very soul of the prophecy is found in 2:4, which may be translated thus: "Behold, he is puffed up, and his soul in him is not honest; yet the righteous man shall live through the faithfulness of his faith."

The prophet stood in the watch tower for a spiritual revelation of the divine One. And with the message came the instruction of the Lord: "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it" (2:2). The word "faith," used by our prophet, has a wider meaning than the application made of it by Paul in Romans 1:17; Gal. 3:11. The meaning is seen in the antithesis. The inflated heathen are contrasted with the faithful people of God. If, however, you will study the word "faith" in the case of Abraham (Gen. 15:6), and in Isaiah, you will find that though the prime meaning is not implicit trust in God's grace, as in Paul's use of the term, nevertheless that thought is included in the content.

Our fidelity to God correlates with God's fidelity to us and brings life. However your experience of inner life may clash with the facts of this outer world, be "steadfast, immovable" and you shall live. This is Habakkuk's thought. The "faith" of Paul is used in the sense of contrast to the righteousness that comes through obedience to the ceremonial law. Hence, the watch-word of the New Testament is : "The just shall live by faith," and that of the Old is: "The just shall live by their faithfulness." A serious problem of God's justice confronts Habakkuk. In the statement of the historical ground of the problem, there have been, speaking broadly, three main divisions among Bible scholars: 1. The "violence" (1:2) is by Assyrians shown toward Judah, and the Chaldeans are raised up to punish the former. 2. The righteous in 1:2 is Israel, and the wicked their heathen oppressors. 3. By far the larger number of critics believe that the "violence" is shown by cruel Jews to their brethren, and the Chaldeans are raised up to punish the sins of Judah.

But whatever be the historical problem, the moral problem remains the same. As he faces the facts that seem to belie the revelation of God's nature he is bewildered. The prophet expostulates with God for using for a scourge on Israel a nation more wicked than they. He receives the answer that though the vision tarry it will come at last; and that the just shall live by their faithfulness. Then come the five woes upon the Chaldeans for their ambition, greed, cruelty, drunkenness, and idolatry. He closes with a prayer and song of trust and praise, that is so beautifully consistent with the original meaning of the name Habakkuk, and "embraces" the promises of God with a clinging faith.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

In its connection with the past, with the present, and the future, the psalm of the third chapter has a splendid sweep of vision. Of vivid style and exultant joy, even in the midst of hovering darkness, it has not only been a spring of life in the desert of the temple worship, but has, "in the midst of years," pressed through the gates of the old covenant into the new. The prayer of the prophet is answered: "In the midst of the years make (thyself) known; in wrath (confusion) remember mercy" (3:2). Some, with a mystical turn of mind, have spiritualized this whole chapter; relating its every clause to some phase of the second Advent of Christ. It is well to be very cautious in accepting an interpretation like this. It was a glorious vision for which Habakkuk patiently waited.

After the five woes are pronounced, there comes the holy hush, the reverential fear of Jehovah who comes in power to take possession of the world. "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (2:20). It is a clear vision of God's power displayed in the protecting of His people and His Anointed. He does not speak particularly of the latter for Jehovah's glory fills his whole horizon. Who is the Anointed? Not the unworthy Jehoiakim, nor the Jewish nation, for no prophet sings a more universal note. Neither Jerusalem nor Judah is even mentioned. In answer to the prayer: "thy will be done, thy Kingdom come," the whole world will be filled with the glory of Jehovah. A new Kingdom will come that will include, not Israel according to the flesh, but all men in accordance with the spirit. The world power itself is to be subject to the judgment of Jehovah. Though this theophany of God is somewhat obscure, and no particular person is named, the fundamentals of the great spiritual Kingdom are given and, best of all, a program for the new birth of the race.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

Habakkuk's problem is the problem of Job and the author of Ecclesiastes; namely, "Why does wickedness triumph unchecked?" In the form of expostulation with God, the prophet challenges Him to defend his action and vindicate his righteousness. God answers by announcing the Chaldean nation as the scourge of the tyrant, which is, we believe, the Jewish nation. If the prophet was before confused he is now astounded, and asks why Chaldeans, more wicked than Judah, should be chosen as an instrument of punishment for the latter. He speaks out boldly.

In his attitude toward God, this prophet radically differs from all those who came before him. They talked to the people about God, but he talks to God about the people. They exhorted the people to flee from their sins and threatened them with the wrath of God; he dares to challenge God's unaccountable position in this morally governed world, and points to the people to enforce his argument. Their talk to God was a prayer, but his is an expostulation. If other prophets had scepticism they hid it in their hearts; if Habakkuk had doubts they came from an honest, earnest man who expressed them, not for the purpose of establishing sceptical doctrine, but as in a dazed condition he groped in the gloom seeking the light of faith.

His reverence for revelation is deep and genuine, but this is diametrically opposed by experience. He is bewildered in his attempt to adjust the omnipotence and justice of God to the facts of history, and is driven to speculation for relief. He then becomes the introducer of "Wisdom Literature" among the prophets.

The old doctrine of reward and punishment seems no longer to apply, and no longer can be read aright the aim of God in the outer works of men. Our prophet turns through the gate that leads to the unseen; and back of this sight world in the Kingdom of the Eternal, he finds solution of the problem. Above the turmoil of earth, "the just shall live by faith," rings like a bugle blast, that ever and anon through the ages has quickened men from "dead works to serve the living God." Caught up and intensified by the great apostle to the Gentiles, and echoed by the monk at Erfurt, in each instance it resulted in a reformation of religious thought.

In this we find the ground lines of the new Kingdom; the spiritual and universal notes of the Gospel, of which Habakkuk, with one exception, is the greatest evangel among the prophets. In the third chapter, which is a prayer poem, he makes review of God's dealings. "O Lord, I have heard thy speech (had report of thee) and was afraid. O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years. In wrath (confusion), remember mercy" (3:2). In this chapter we hear the tramp of the multitudes of the Exodus, the thunder of Sinai, the tender strains of mercy and the shout of joy and triumph, on the Great Day of the Lord. "Yet," though the "fig" and the "olive" and the "flock" fail, "yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation" (3:18).

The problem is solved. The God of nature is the God of history and providence, and an abiding confidence in His mercy brings both joy and life. We lack space to do justice to his remarkable literary style. His language is independent, forceful and finished; full of startling turns and rare words; and though at times he verges on violence, he is skillful in organization, and brings his thoughts to a symmetrical and well-rounded whole. No wonder that this unique, independent, original prophet marks a new era in prophetic literature.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

There are many men in the world like Habakkuk, whose finely organized nature and exalted conceptions of God's righteousness peculiarly imperil their faith. In their earnest search for the truth, the tempter comes to prompt the question: "O Lord, how long shall I cry and thou wilt not hear?" and helps to draw the conclusion that as "the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth" (1:4). The honest doubter and the avowed sceptic are as far apart as heaven and hell.

The "woes" of the second chapter enforce the inexorable law, "with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." "Woe to him that increaseth which is not his." Like a man in debt, and continuing to borrow that the pleasures of sin might be continued for a season, so to these men of blood and violence pay-day will inevitably come. Injustice rots the heart. It carries in itself the seeds of its own death. In man himself is an automatic judgment seat.

The prophet stands in the midst of the nameless years of " inarticulate turmoil." We, like Habakkuk, look back over the waste of years to that far-away epoch when God bared His arm in the deliverance of His people; but, ah, that is so far away in the hazy distance and with no token of the early coming of the Lord, the heart grows faint, and our prayer seems unanswered. We face China with her teeming millions of heathen almost untouched by the Gospel, and stand aghast at the bloody and triumphant sword of the unspeakable Turk, and age after age goes by, and still God does not come. We can at least pray the prayer of Habakkuk: " O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years; in confusion remember mercy."

XXX

ZEPHANIAH

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

ZEPHANIAH prophesied in the days of Josiah. This faithful preacher of righteousness prepared the people for the great reformation that came when "the book of the law of the Lord was found in the temple" (2 Kings 22:8). The prophet was of royal blood and traces his genealogy back to King Hezekiah. This gives more weight to his severe arraignment of "the princess and the king's sons" (1:8). Sons they were, indeed, of his great-great-grandfather. It is probable the prophet foresees the havoc to be wrought by the Scythian invasion from the north, and another judgment, later, that will break over the world with great fury, and unbribed by Egypt (1:18), or unchecked by Nineveh will bring desolation on all except the "purged and purified" remnant of Israel, whom the prophet declares "none shall make afraid." Jerusalem receives his fiercest denunciation, and judge, prince, priest and prophet are alike recreant to duty, polluted, tyrannical and rebellious and all alike deaf to the warnings God has given them through His judgments on the surrounding nations. Contrary to the general expectation, the remnant will not gain victory through earthly power, and march in military triumph to take undisputed possession of a Jerusalem purged of the hated heathen.

Zephaniah's remnant is a triumph over iniquity, its riches not of this world. "I will also leave in the midst of them an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, etc." (3:12,13).

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

Jesus declares that "salvation is of the Jews," seeming to imply that salvation is found alone at Jerusalem, and that if Gentiles are to be saved they must make a trip to Zion. In the next sentence comes the great spiritual truth that "the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (John 4: 23).

Our prophet seems to make a bold attempt to break away from the narrowed conception of a localized salvation. "Men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen" (2: 11). While it will be unnecessary, he seems to say, to make a trip to Jerusalem, the worshipper must at least look toward the holy Mount. These promises to the Jews, and more especially to the remnant, is fulfilled in Him. The historical center is Jerusalem, and the personal center is Jesus Christ. So that while Zephaniah does not mention a personal Messiah, he gives some essential elements of His Kingdom. The "remnant" will be an "afflicted and poor people." Notes, though faint, of the universality of salvation are heard; and what is more important still is a conception of worship that, while defective, is the prophecy of "the hour" when men shall worship Him in spirit and in truth. In the closing paragraph, a sunburst of the day of the Lord caused the seer to break forth in exultant strains: "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel, etc." On account of the sudden change of literary expression, yet, as we think, without sufficient reason, this closing exaltation is ascribed by some to a late author. It is the attempt so often made in some quarters to eliminate the prediction element from prophecy.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

It is certain that we have made no progress in time, as Habakkuk prophesied later than Zephaniah. The predictions of no other prophet have been more literally fulfilled in the present "desolation" and utterly "forsaken" condition of Ashdod, Askelon and Gaza. Egypt, Assyria and other nations mentioned in the prophecy have met the fate of the above cities; but the "remnant," or the church of Zion, has been preserved in a more glorious form of the Christian Church. While new illustrations are given of judgment as a remedial agent of sin, and also of the fact that all nations will be called to account for their sins, these can hardly be called brand new ideas in prophecy. We may claim, however, for our prophet, a new note struck in the announcement that these nations need not journey to Jerusalem, but that the worship of God may take place anywhere. So that the city of Zion is not only purged by the fiery ordeals of judgment, but there comes a dawn of a more spiritual conception of religion. Here is a sober, honest man, who, even at the risk of being deemed dull, refuses to be sensational.

Pretensions and a haughty stride to the altars of the old covenant God, without true holiness, avail nothing. Though born to the royal purple, he is unbribed by the glint of gold and undazed by the splendour of gorgeous ritual. To him, haughtiness is the deadly enemy of God, and humility a synonym of holiness. The missionary aim of the prophecy is as lofty as the judgments are severe. The lips or language of the heathen, hitherto defiled by names of strange gods, will be purified. Henceforth men of all nations will come under the same yoke, they will serve Him together "with one consent" (or shoulder) (3:9). A dream, indeed, is this of a universal brotherhood.

In this Book we have no analysis of social conditions or individual character. In the Lord's Day, the battle cry of earth is merged and mingled with that of heaven, and into the vision of earthly renovation there breaks the apocalypse of the end of all things. In this, perhaps, we have the sufficient reason why our prophet makes no call to repentance. This accounts also, perhaps, for his severe literary style, the lack of plastic power of expression, and the very defective poetical character. Yet Zephaniah is more than a "mere compiler"; as is proved by his deep sense of sin, and the profundity of moral tone; by his philosophy of history and his true interpretation of suffering; by his impassioned and evangelical spirit, and his clear note of a universal brotherhood.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

What earnest reformer has not felt the dead weight of indifference on the part of those who should have been most vitally concerned? "And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search out Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled (stagnant) on their lees, etc." (1:12). The figure is of wine that is allowed to stand until it has become sweet, weak and ropy, and to the very verge of decay. Years before, many men of powerful influence had risen in great enthusiasm and were expectant of immediate reform of national life. The great mass of the people moved slowly. These men of clear vision of national needs lacked patience, lost hope, and ascribed the reason of failure to Jehovah, saying: "The Lord will do no good, neither will he do evil."

Our lesson is that of patience with the multitude, in our work of social reform and religious enlightenment. Let us remember Him who "had compassion on them." Let us not grow weary in well doing and say "the Lord will do no good"; for then Josiah's reforms will fail and Zephaniah's announcement of judgment will only bring the cause into disrepute. If any of us belong to that class whose "last state is worse than the first," and who, in ease and self-indulgence, are blocks to the progress of spiritual religion, we need to be alarmed; for Jehovah is on our track "searching us out" as with a lantern. We fear not those who bear the torch and sword of fierce opposition. They drive the hosts of God the closer together; but those of a freezing indifference, of a supercilious air, of a decaying respectability, what can we do in the face of a glacier like this? Nothing. Jehovah must come to "search them out."

Sensationalism that stirs the emotions only, and whose object is simply outward reform, results then as now in a reaction that deadens conscience and paralyzes endeavour that has a far more worthy end. The sober insistence of the honest prophet, on an every-day life of personal holiness, is good to hear. It reminds us much of the method of Him who " spake as never man spake." Zephaniah, like Christ, joined no national reform parties, but put all emphasis on the humility and righteousness of the individual life. Royal blood will not avail, and the princes are arraigned. High vocations are no sinecure against God's just judgment, and doom is pronounced on recreant prophets. Even the Church has in it no virtue of salvation and if, as heretofore, men full of pride come vaunting themselves on the " holy Mount " (43: 11), and expect holiness of place to suffice rather than holiness of life, they will soon be undeceived; for " the Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save " (3: 17).

XXXI

HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH

THE KEY TO THE BOOKS

THE last three prophets, as given in our English Bible, are called "the prophets of the Restoration." The two first are supposed to have been among the forty-two thousand exiles returning under Zerubbabel. The altar of burnt offering and temple foundation had been built, but work had been arrested for fourteen years by the bitter opposition of the Samaritans and others. To restore to the people courage, hope and zeal was the work of these prophets. The Book of Haggai, containing four messages, all of which are distinctly dated, was delivered in a space of about four months. They are so brief that many believe they are only synopses of those originally delivered. The first is a rebuke of the people for living in ceiled houses while God's house lies in ruins. The second is a note of encouragement and promises of a glory of the new temple greater than that of the old. The third gives an explanation of their uncleanness and a promise of blessing. The fourth gives to Zerubbabel personal assurances of protection, and rebukes his enemies.

The returned exiles had about reconciled themselves to this stagnant condition of affairs, when Haggai and Zechariah sang songs of hope that reinspired them with such determination that in four years the temple was built on the long-neglected foundation. For the history of this thrilling and interesting period read the Book of Ezra.

About two months after Haggai began prophesying, came Zechariah the prophet among the people to do practically the same work as the former. Broadly speaking, Haggai stood for the restoration of the temple, while

Zechariah stood for the restoration of worship. The prophecy has two grand divisions (chapters 1–8 and 9–14), so dissimilar from each other as to cause much doubt concerning the unity of the Book. Worship, however, is the unifying word. The first eight chapters contain eight visions: the last six concern the Messianic Kingdom. The influence of the exile has a marked effect upon the style of the prophets, who wrote with a far-off horizon in view. The tendency, therefore, is toward idealization, symbolism and apocalypse. This prophet has eight visions in a single night. (1) The angelic "horseman" announces "peace." (2) The "four horns" will break the world power of opposition. (3) After these encouraging tokens comes the "measuring line" of Jerusalem with God for her wall of protection. (4) In Joshua we see the High Priest in "filthy garments" as a representative of the people, yet from the lowly "root" and "stone." He comes in purity and power to sanctify the temple for the worship of a holy God. (5) Thus, through Christ henceforth, in a finished temple the "golden candlestick" will receive and dispense a divine glory. (6) In the "flying roll" come swift judgments, but in the (7) "winged women" a swift removal of sin to the far-off plains of Shinar. (8) In the last vision, the first is again confirmed. The "form was chariots," prophesies a peace that is permanent and the providence of God that is universal.

Thus in these visions there runs the orderly and progressive idea of public worship. The first grand division closes with an answer to the question concerning fasts instituted at the beginning of the captivity on account of the destruction of the city and the temple. The second division (Chaps. 9–14) has many difficult problems that, perhaps, will never be solved. Whoever may be their author and whatever may be their date or exact meaning, the closing prophecies concern the King in majesty and triumph and a universal dominion, and the Good Shepherd in meekness, rejected and despised. The great

Jehovah delivers His people, the fountain is opened for cleanness, and a purified remnant with the very pots marked "holy," joyously celebrate the feasts in praise and worship of the Great Deliverer. Thus Zechariah's message takes a broader scope than Haggai's; and he does not deem the restoration of the temple complete with the building of the material structure, but only when filled and furnished with a God who makes it a permanent abode, and a people purified and empowered by His spiritual presence.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOKS

In "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ" we find the name of Zerubbabel (Matt. 1:12). Amidst the crash of Kingdoms as described in the closing paragraph of the Book, God promises protection to him as the head of the house of David and representative of the Kingdom eternal. Joshua and Zerubbabel, the first being a religious and the second a civil leader in the return, are types of Christ as Priest and King of His people. The Day of the Lord that is to overthrow the "throne of the Kingdoms," gives severe test to the true and the false. It "signifieth the removal of those things that are shaken as of those things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Heb. 12:27).

Haggai's prediction that the glory of the second temple would exceed that of the first was a prophecy that the second would witness the presence of the great Teacher Himself, who will fulfill the types of the old and usher in the spiritual worship of the new. So that henceforth here will be the seat of his revelation and a greater Prince than Zerubbabel will be the seal of God's utterances to the world. Henceforth will come the enrichment of the temple by the homage of the nations and the exaltation of the greater Davidic Ruler above all the princedoms of the world. "And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts" (2:7).

Next to Isaiah, Zechariah is richest in prophecies of Christ's coming and His character. Under the figure of the candlestick and the two olive trees, Christ is shown in the twofold character of Priest and King. The "two anointed ones" are Joshua, the priest, and Zerubbabel, the king or prince. In a preceding vision (chapter 3) is foreshadowed the relation of our High Priest to both Satan and the people. He as our representative lays aside the "filthy garments," and as our Messiah clothes us with "robes of righteousness."

Carrying out the idea a crown is "set upon the head of Joshua," the head of the spiritual kingdom, and Zerubbabel who represents the head of the temporal kingdom is left uncrowned. The humility and the condescension of our Lord are shown under the figure of the "stone," the "filthy garments," the "rejected shepherd," the riding upon an ass, etc. His triumph, however, is seen in the opening fountain, the crowned High Priest, the turning of the Gentiles. The foreshadowing of His generation and His purifying power is seen in the "fountain" opened to the house of David for sin and for uncleanness (13:1). There is a number of particular predictions of Christ: the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (9:9), the selling of Him for thirty pieces of silver (11:13), the mention of Him "whom they have pierced" (12:10), that "He shall be King over all the earth" (14:9), "and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea" (9:10). The power of His attractiveness and the prophecy of a universal brotherhood are found in the figures of the "Beauty" and the "Bands." His intelligence and providence, in the vision of the stone with seven eyes (3:9).

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOKS

While other prophets of the Restoration give some expression regarding the relationship of the temple and the spiritual kingdom, it is the distinction of Haggai that this indeed is the subject of his every discourse. In Jewish thought and history, the temple is closely identified with not only the life of the nation, but also the peculiar presence of God among His people. But this prophet goes a step further and shows that the ritual of the old is only a means to the spiritual worship of the new, and this prophecy of restoration is not so much of outward splendour as of inward and spiritual glory. The two temples are not distinguished from God's house. They are ever, through the ages, one and the same with different manifestations of His glory. Like the wise men who came to the birth of Christ, he sees the Gentile world streaming to Zion bearing precious gifts in the hand and receiving more precious gifts in their hearts. With even a faint glimpse of this glorious revelation, what wonder that in the prophet's view all earthly things will subserve the transformed grandeur of this the dwelling place of God.

In the time before Haggai and Zechariah there lay the years of Exile and the great prophecies of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Daniel. And it would be strange indeed if there were not heard new notes of a divine kingdom. The prophet has been criticized for giving his attention to the restoration of a material fabric; but when we study the conditions he faced, we commend him as the practical prophet who does with his might what his hands find to do.

Haggai and Zechariah were not only contemporaries, but also spoke alternately to the people. The latter was a young priest of the house of Iddo, who, born in Babylon, came up at the first return of the exiles. As we have seen, the influence of the exile is very marked on this prophecy. If the magnificence of the first temple as a material fabric far exceeds the second, and, by necessity, the order of the priesthood and the observance of the sacrifices must henceforth in earthly glory fade into insignificance, what must be the result on the visions of these prophets of hope? (2:3). Thus the conception here given is of a spiritual Jerusalem with mighty walls and towers, but protected by Jehovah as an invisible wall of fire. "To show mercy and compassion" outweighs fasting, the lowliness of the priest becomes the source of his power, the chief glory of the temple is the presence of the Invisible One, the Messiah is the suffering servant; and the dream of an earthly kingdom becomes the vision of a spiritual dominion extending from sea to sea.

Zechariah sees the dawn of a new epoch in the evolution of the world's history. A mighty revolution will sweep over the world and change the center of influence and power. The viewpoint of the Jew and the aspirations of the Gentile will undergo complete change. The whole machinery of earth and hell and heaven are set in motion to establish a kingdom whose foundation is Christ, and therefore eternal, and whose aim is spiritual and world wide.

Like the pure golden oil pouring silently into the bowl of the lamp, so the Holy Spirit in that glad day will ceaselessly feed the sevenfold flame of adoration in the new church of the purified remnant. This vision of the Holy Spirit was a credit to Joel. Yea, Zechariah seems to stand in the streets of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost! "Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, "We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (8:22, 23).

There are points in the style and temperament, as well as in the gifts, that easily distinguish this one prophet from all others. He had the gift of plain speech, with no attempt at brilliancy or originality. Ever loyal to the past, his speech is ever to the present. He was "mighty in the Scriptures" and used them for testimony but never for creed. He is a philosopher of history to whom the great miracle is God's truth that woos, and wins, and satisfies; or rejected, judges the lives of men. Space forbids the study of Zechariah as a prophet of peace, of vision power, of the mediatorial Christ, and even of his revelation of the nature of Satan, and of Jehovah's angels. And in the latter, Zechariah introduces the order and rank.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOKS

Reading closely the history in the Book of Ezra, we find that failure was caused not so much by the opposition of enemies as by the lack of faith on the part of the people. Opposition from without is not to be feared. We are the architects of our own fate, and carry in our own breasts the possibility of failure or success. If we fail we magnify the power of the enemy; if we succeed, the importance of ourselves.

Pointing to the severe drought to prove the point, Haggai told the people they would gain nothing by parsimony toward the temple. There is a financial side to the argument for the Church of Christ in our midst. It brings the infusion of integrity upon which business confidence rests, of virtue and love that saved the homes, the creation of restrictions that saved society, and the quickening of conscience to recognize the spirit of the golden rule which tends to banish and thwart all destructive methods, and ushers in the constructive principles of a universal brotherhood. With a face of piety the world spirit says, "Wait till the Lord begins the work; the appropriate time has not come." On the eve of any good enterprise Satan's plea is usually postponement. The message then is the message now. "Take up your axes and go to the mountains." The Lord will do for us only what we cannot do for ourselves.

Let us mention also a few lessons to be drawn from Zechariah. We who have seen a little mountainous country, and more especially a despised little village, become the most renowned and glorious of the earth; we who have studied the fortunes of Israel and seen the persecuted little remnant at last become the "seed corn of the world"; shall we forget the day of small things? Indeed, in the earthly life of Him whom Zechariah prophesied, we have the signal illustration that "it is not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (4:6).

Sin is not simply a ceremonial curse nor a social crime. While our religion is strongly ethical it is more than ethics or morality. While we might call our Christ "Beauty" or "Bands," His life is something more than esthetical and His religion than a brotherhood. His religion is that of Zechariah: a repentance, filled with sorrow for sins, that makes men turn from sin with trust in God through one great Mediatorial High Priest to enter the fold of the mighty Shepherd of the sheep.

Zechariah illustrates the only safe method of Bible interpretation. He is ever true to the letter, but only that the Spirit might be found and taught. Fasts are instituted at the destruction of the temple. Shall they continue? Our prophet finds that which is more essential: namely, the practice of righteousness. Very little good and much harm has come from self-imposed afflictions of the body. Let us leave the cave of the hermit life and join Him who "came feasting" and "who receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

"The letter killeth." It is destructive. It gave to the world its legless philosophies, its armless religion and its headless theologies. It instituted the inquisition and baptized the world with blood. It bound men through the ages till the monk of Erfurt found the little Latin Bible and blew the bugle blast of religious freedom.

In view of the danger of a deadly literalism, our prophet sees the day when Jerusalem, that had so long been the local habitation of God and a fountain of holiness to the covenant children, begins to lift toward the invisible and spiritual; and later generations shall see it rise till it becomes the New Jerusalem, and hear our Lord say, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

XXXII

MALACHI

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

THIS prophecy is anonymous. The book Malachi (My messenger) is given the title expression of the mission of the prophet. While we do not claim that it is impossible that the title should be the prophet's real name, we do say it is extremely improbable; and that against this probability there stands opposed virtually the full weight of modern scholarship. As a representative of a struggling, persecuted people, he bitterly arraigns the civil and religious authorities. For this reason, perhaps, he wisely chose to withhold his name.

You will find the "key" in 4:2: "But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings." Whatever may be the exact import of these words concerning which there is much division, this prophet preaches a gospel of both mercy and judgment. His promise is a "Sun" of healing, his demands a righteous life. He sees the truth as a "savour of death unto death" as well as of "life unto life." Hence it is that we find seeming contradiction in this prophecy. He is bold to say that God's name shall be "great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered, etc." He is just as insistent that "the covenant might be with Levi," and that the "sons of Jacob" should "remember the law of Moses." The kingdom of mercy must have an ethical basis. He seemed to see clearly the mission God had in the chosen people, and how through disobedience they had pitiably failed.

He had no need for the past except to throw light on the future. Elijah, the restorer, must come that the way might be prepared for Christ the Redeemer. He is thus a "messenger" of warning and a herald of hope. He charges Israel with a lack of love and honour to God, profanity in divine service, unfaithfulness on the part of the priests, and among other social evils, ungodly marriages resulting in divorce, and bitter domestic sorrow. Withholding tithes due to God, he terms robbery; and promises temporal blessing to the prompt and liberal giver. Surely, for conditions like these is needed an Elijah of Righteousness to prepare the way for the Sun of healing. Thus, in the marriage of judgment and mercy, will God's justice be vindicated. Who then will dare to say: "Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord"?

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

The Day of the Lord in this prophecy receives fresh revelation. A messenger with an office like that of Elijah will prepare the way of the covenant angel of God, or for Jehovah Himself. Isaiah, it is true, mentions the forerunner (40:3), but there he was a "voice" of prophecy, here he fills a place of essential importance in historical development. There, the main purpose is the removal of hindrances in the outer world, here, of offences against his holiness. Christ identified this messenger with John the Baptist, and thus bears powerful testimony to His own divinity (Matt. 11:14).

Malachi ("angel") prophesies the "angel of the covenant," thus preaching the "law of Moses" and the love of Jehovah. This last prophecy of the old dispensation reaches across four hundred silent years and clasps the hand of the forerunner of the new. How fitting that this last messenger of the Old Testament, while ringing new changes on the law, should be privileged to see the last and greatest of the prophets, and catch the vision of the Sun of Righteousness who is to "fulfill both the law and the prophets."

Ezekiel saw the "glory of the Lord" (the Shekinah) forsake the temple, and Zechariah saw its return in the hovering presence over His House. The perfect manifestation of His glory is yet to come. There is known no promise of earthly glory, but in that Messianic Day will come the judgment of fire to the wicked, and a benediction of "healing" to those who fear His name.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

While this prophecy is without date the period is clearly reflected. Judah is a Persian province; the wall of Jerusalem and the temple with its services have been restored. The evils denounced are almost identical with those denounced by Nehemiah. The immediate expectation of the coming of the Messianic Kingdom is sorely disappointed, and the people with the added discouragement of the drought sank into scepticism. The main question in the Book, of questions asked by priest and people, is the one asked in a state of unbelief: "Is this a morally governed world?" Surely not, as the service of Jehovah does not pay. In the Day of the Lord, "righteousness" and not salvation is the word used by our prophet. As we have already seen, it is the broader term, and has in it both judgment and mercy. The same sun ("Sun") that melts the ice will harden the clay. Furthermore, a righteous life has its reward both in spiritual and temporal blessing. But to an unrighteous life the Day of the Lord will be a curse.

At first glance we are much surprised at this late prophet's attitude toward the ritual. Let us inquire why he should set such high value upon it. Under conditions of a lowered morality, elements came into the ritual that were gross and debasing. If through spiritual vision the people had found the law and ritual inadequate to express their faith and contain their broadened conceptions, it were a different message our prophet had given. Here, however, because of their disobedience of law and their looseness of religious life, Malachi does well to arraign them for the sin of neglect. He does well to exalt the law that embodied truth, that saved Judah through the centuries of her changing fortunes, enabling her to respect the encroachment of the disintegrating spirit of the Holiness world; that "law of Moses" that preserved those high ideals that led men at last to their realization in Jesus Christ. It has been charged that Malachi preached a dangerous truth here. Among an unspiritual people all law and truth are dangerous. Better no worship than a loose negligent worship. Such a people degrade all they touch and there is here a veiled threat that Jehovah may take the Kingdom from the chosen people and "turn to the Gentiles," who will offer a more acceptable service. Hence we see this prophet's attitude is far from retrogression, but makes an ever advancing march in the progress of revelation.

We have noted under those prophecies how, with Habakkuk, prophecy passes into the schools of Wisdom, and speculation, with Zephaniah, into Apocalypse, so now in Malachi, changes into the academic model. It takes the form of the scholasticism of the Rabbis. A statement is made, then comes an imaginary objection, and last, the truth is driven home by convincing evidence. This style, however, does not make him less a prophet. His utterances on the principles of divine love, fatherhood and holiness, high ideals of priestly service, a discriminating judgment between reward of good and evil, "fruits meet for repentance" and resulting prosperity, and his spiritual conception of the Day of the Lord are all marks of a genuine prophet. He gives us the highest message on marriage and divorce, excepting the words of Christ, to be found in all the Bible. But most original of all his words, more generous and evangelical than any other prophet, is his startling statement concerning the acceptable worship of the heathen (1:11). Little less wonderful is his noble conception of the priest: "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger (the revealing angel) of the Lord of hosts" (2:7).

What a striking expression of the danger of the two extremes! Grace does not come by magic nor by manipulation; neither does a consecration to this high office necessitate the surrender of the intellect. We must not charge Malachi with legalism because he requires tithes as the most practical evidence of repentance. Nor that he marks decadence of the prophetic spirit because of the complete change of literary style and prophetic type. Opening with Jehovah as a divine King, advancing toward the thought of God as a divine Father, he closes with the glorious consummation of a universal and spiritual brotherhood.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

1. As failure to support the priests was a practical evidence that the people cared little for the holy things represented by the priests, so now, often the best gauge of any community religious interest is to be found in their support of the ministry. That Paul "laboured with his hands" to support himself was not complimentary to the community in which he laboured. "The labourer is worthy of his hire and he that preacheth the gospel must live by the gospel."

2. Those who oppose the doctrine of a free moral agency quote with much confidence the words of Malachi quoted by St. Paul: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (1:2, 3). It is unfair, however, to apply this passage to the election of individuals. They are two nations represented by these two characters. God chose the nation of Jacob (Israel) and rejected the nation of Esau (Edomite) after the first had shown its worthiness and the second its unworthiness to carry out the purpose He had in them.

3. As we have seen, God does not require when we accept Him that we should surrender our intellect, neither that we should carry a long face or go "mournfully" about as if to say to the world, "Look at me and take warning." I think our Lord would have us represent a

religion that is designed to make us "rejoice and be exceeding glad."

4. After the going of the coarser forms of idolatry, there often comes, as in the history of Israel, a refined and narrow pharisaism. The latter state is worse than the first. Self-righteousness is of all sins most incurable. "Sinners and harlots will enter into the Kingdom before them." Let a John the Baptist come in mighty power to cleanse us of those coarse and ugly forms of sins, and then, oh then, let us hear gladly the voice saying: "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

5. Each prophet must foretell the message with which he is commissioned by his King, and then fill to completion prophetic revelation. Isaiah gives us the glad news of the redemption; Jeremiah, weeping with those that weep, gives his people comfort in a warning, choking with sobs; Ezekiel shows forth the splendour and glory of God in contrast to the weakness of man; Daniel prophesies the everlasting Kingdom, and Hosea preaches the needs of knowledge and a new conscience; Amos, retribution of Israel and vengeance on his enemies; Obadiah hurls judgments on Edom, and Jonah's escapade enforces the mission to the heathen; Micah gives a practical application of religion undefiled; and Nahum, true to his name, gives consolation to his people; Hosea gives us an essential part of the rich content of faith in "faithfulness"; Haggai and Zechariah, hopes of restoration in the Holy Land, and, the latter, clear pictures of the Desire of the Nations; while Malachi reaches across the four hundred silent years and clasps hands with John the Baptist, and gladdens us with the sight of "The Sun of Righteousness."

XXXIII

FOUR HUNDRED SILENT YEARS

WE pass through this gate of Malachi only to come to another stretch of the road. When we cease reading the Old Testament and take up the New, it is like entering a new world. This intervening four hundred years is not, as some one said, "A dark valley between two sunlit mountains." It is rather an illuminated bridge stretching from the records of the old theocracy, closed by Malachi's, to the proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven by Matthew. When the apocryphal books that threw such floods of light upon this era were accepted by the Catholics at the council of Trent, and rejected by the reformers, the Protestants swung to the far extreme and utterly ignored them. It has meant a sharp loss to Protestantism.

When we left Malachi we were in a Persian era; entering Matthew we stand in a Roman world. We pass from Palestine under oriental rule, land sparsely settled and a people poor and struggling under burdens of injustice. We find a country teeming with a large population, and a people rich and prosperous under the protecting hand of Roman justice.

Are these silent years simply a rude break in God's revelation? Ignorant of intervening history, how can we understand such terms as "Sanhedrin," "Pharisees," "Sadducees," "Scribes," "Augustus," "Herod," Greek names, "Traditions of the Elders," "Synagogue," "Dispersion," "Temple," the new geographical divisions of the land, etc., etc.

Up to the exile, religious separation was the policy adopted to prevent world conformity. God's purpose has ever been to bless the world through the seed of Abraham. The opposite danger now is world hate; and the exile broke the shell of national pride and cured them for ever of idolatry. Their temple was destroyed and synagogues, like little lighthouses, sprang up all over the world, so that when Christ came there was no village too poor to afford one of the many-sided little institutions. The exile, under providence, slew the Hebrew language, or rather, petrified it. Thus the precious seeds of the old covenant were locked in the winter of the world's hope. The ceremonial law could not be quickened except it die. But as winter preserves the seed and prophesies the summer fruitage, so this priestless, prophetless age, protecting from change the old Scriptures, lifted expectation to the coming springtime when the "Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in his wings."

In the exile, those were taken whom they feared to leave behind. So that they were the strongest who went out and who were preserved in pure strains of religion and blood. Some one said that God sifted three nations for seed corn to plant New England. So here, it seems, He is selecting seed corn with which to replant the Holy Land. The bridge was not yet completed. Their idolatry is dead; but patriotism rises to its highest height. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." Rich and prosperous, they become poor, and undergo the hardships of a long journey to find the land poverty stricken and overrun with enemies. With sword in one hand and trowel in the other they restore the ruins of their beloved city.

The "Desolation of Abomination," as prophesied by Daniel, came on the twenty-fifth of December, 168 B. C., when, under the rule of Antiochus the madman, a sow was offered on the altar and the liquor sprinkled over the sacred parts of the holy temple. Under Mattathius and his five valiant sons, called the Maccabees, the nation was freed, and the treaty of Jewish Independence signed in 142 B. C. They could not be conquered with a Greek sword, but they unconditionally surrendered to the Greek language and the Greek ideas.

It was the renaissance of the oriental world. This glorious language, born among a people who saw the invisible and "groped for the altar stairs," was well fitted to enshrine the spiritual things of the gospel kingdom. Stories of the marvelous books of the Jews reached Egypt, and Ptolemy dispatched commissioners to Jerusalem requesting the high priest to choose six picked men from each tribe and send them down to translate the Bible into Greek. Hence came the Septuagint, used by Christ and the apostles.

The foreign Jews were more liberal in thought than those dwelling in Jerusalem, and the Greek version received many books as canonical that were never admitted into the Hebrew Bible. Hence the Apocrypha. Jerome included, for the most part, the rejected books into his Latin Vulgate. Hence the much revered Catholic Bible. This history shows us how the three enemies of early Christianity are made to serve it. The Greeks provided the language in which the Gospel was enshrined, the Romans the law under which it was protected, and the Jews the synagogues in which it was preached. The value of this history is heightened by the fact that Matthew is peculiarly the Gospel of the past, the Gospel of fulfillment. Malachi and Matthew reach out for each other. Thus we have tried to lead you up to the door of the New Testament.

The Messianic prophecies have been fulfilled. The deepest quest of the Jewish soul should end here. "Christ" is now the "Key." and the Key is Christ. In our "Progress" we have been following the trail of light and have come to the Source. Our iron "keys" become golden in the hands of the evangelists. Oh, may our hearts burn within us as we walk with Him by the way!

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PART II

THE NEW TESTAMENT

XXXIV

MATTHEW

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

MATTHEW, whose original name was Levi, was called while sitting as toll collector at Capernaum. The newly converted publican, according to Luke, gave a farewell feast to his friends in honour of Jesus. Touching the fourfold Gospel, the symbolism taken from Ezekiel is full of interest. A man is given for Matthew, a lion for Mark, an ox for Luke, an eagle for John. Thus each adds his touch in the completion of the picture of Christ; namely, His Kingly character, His strength, His sacrifice and His eternal Godhead. Matthew wrote for the Jew, Mark for the Roman, Luke for the Greek, and John for the Christian. The first is a Gospel of the past; the second, of the present; the third, of the future; and the fourth, of eternity. We have in them a preacher, a chronicler, an historian, and a philosopher.

The first three are called synoptic Gospels, in contradistinction to the fourth. Theirs is a record of simple historic facts; and John's, of the inmost spirit. The key to the Book is the "Kingdom of Heaven." The word is peculiar to this evangelist alone, and occurs more than thirty times in his Gospel. Writing to the Jews, he placed great emphasis on the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. His evident aim is to remove the stigma from the name of Christ, to show how He is the fulfillment of Messianic hope, to correct false notions of the Jews, and to give a faithful exposition of the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus, while John sees Christ with God before the world was, and Luke traces His genealogy from Adam, Matthew begins with Abraham and traces the line through the royal house of David. An account here of the death struggle between a Kingdom of earthly glory and one of spiritual blessing.

Messianic salvation is seen to be the moving force of all history. The dispersal of the Jews, a universal peace, the Roman conquest, the Greek language, and the "earnest of the nations," all conspired to usher in the "King of the Jews." Matthew alone records the story of the visit of the wise men, inquiring: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" What a great faith! Gentile heathen seek a baby King of the Jews! The massacre of the infants, the flight into Egypt, and the residence at Nazareth, all peculiar to Matthew, are given to show the Scriptures are fulfilled and that Jesus is Messiah.

In the temptation of Christ we see the deadly conflict between the opposing Kingdoms. "Then the devil leaveth him" and He came out of the wilderness a conquering King, uttering the glad proclamation, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Then came the mustering in and training of the soldiers. His Sermon on the Mount is the constitution and by-laws of the Kingdom. Miracles attest His authority, but Christ deplored His growing fame as a wonder worker because His Kingdom "is within." All those formalists, who are only "Jews outwardly," will knock in vain for entrance to His Kingdom. Who then are His subjects? If they say they have Abraham for their father, the answer is: "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Royal blood is no passport. The Kingdom of Heaven will consist of the aristocracy of the noble soul, and has no regard to antecedents of race or place. His Kingdom is not of this world. It is a Kingdom of "weak things," of "babes," "little ones," "the poor in spirit," "the meek," "they that mourn" and "the heavy laden." Not much here to attract the worldly wise.

He thanked His Father that He had hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes. His Kingdom is not a scholarship prize. Let us not confuse religious faith and psychology. Intellectual conceit and preconceived notions can never solve the world's problems. "The meek shall inherit the earth." Here is the only King who ever assumed authority to choose His own subjects. His choice was not influenced by gold nor blood, nor age, nor calling, nor intellect; no, nor even service. There is no attempt to raise money, muster an army or raise an insurrection. From the call of His first humble disciples to the close of His earthly life, without retracing a single step or changing a single order or the correction of a single word, He moved forward with a serene, unhesitating assurance to the execution of a program that was surely divine.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

As Matthew wrote for the Jews his burden was to prove that Jesus was the Messiah of the prophets. In the first two chapters, five incidents of the infancy of Jesus are shown to be fulfillment of as many ancient prophecies. Echoed and reëchoed by the prophets down the centuries, there was enshrined in the name "Immanuel" by Isaiah, the thought of "God with us." Christ's cradle brings God down to us as His cross bears us up to God. From Christ's genealogy, the conception of the Holy Ghost, the names "Immanuel" and "Jesus," and the worship of the Magi, as given in his introduction, even down to the closing verses of the last chapter; where he catches a new spiritual vision of the "Sun of Righteousness," Matthew never loses sight of his aim to identify Jesus with the Messiah of prophecy.

"That it might be fulfilled," and equivalent phrases, is his favoured expression. About sixty prophecies relating to the Messiah are shown to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The Jew may choose the alternative of surrender to Him as Saviour or standing before Him as Judge. This accounts for the portrayal of the stern side of our Lord's office work. "Dogs" are barred from the Kingdom, "Swine" reject it; as fish they are thrown from the "net," and "the broad way" is crowded. The lack of "the wedding garment," the "foolish virgins," the "goats," and, above all, the Great Denunciation, are words of judgment that fell like doom on the heads of the rejecting scribes and Pharisees. The Saviour will "gather his wheat into his garner," but the Judge will "burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The Pharisees that devour widows' houses are whitewashed "sepulchres, full of dead men's bones." Then come the words that make us shudder: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (23:13–33).

In the closing verses of this same chapter; yea, it seems with no pause in His speech but with heart-breaking sobs in His voice, Jesus the Saviour utters those words of weeping over Jerusalem, that for tenderness and compassion cannot be matched in the world's literature.

Matthew shows clearly the attitude of Jesus to miracles as a test of His divinity. They were not an infallible test, as many had worked miracles before Him. Jesus treated miracles as a concession to human weakness. He said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." As we have seen, the center of belief regarding miracles has been completely reversed. Then faith rested on miracles, now miracles rest on faith. The eighth and ninth chapters record the healing of the leper, of the centurion's servant, of the fever patient. He stills the storm, casts out demons, heals the invalid and raises the damsel. He is Master of disease, of nature and of the unseen forces of evil. He is the searcher of hearts, the conqueror of death, and, above all, the forgiver of sins. Indeed it is all to the intent that they might "know the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

As we enter the New Testament we face the sunrise. Let us keep in mind the steps of progressive revelation. The utter divorce of the Old Testament from the New is disastrous to both. In the Old, we have the transcendence of God and the inner meaning of history, and in the New, its glorious consummation. The New without the Old is historically impossible. The Books of the New would be shorn of their freshness and beauty without its antecedent relations to Israel's history. Because some critics have employed programs so destructive to divine interference, many religious thinkers have looked on a progressive revelation with suspicion. A long, hard fight has been made on the questions of design. Let us keep in mind that the evolution of the material universe is not in the same category with God's revelation. In the former is found God's unhindered program, but in the latter the interrupting moral agency of man and the intermittent but ever recurring incursion of the Divine. In Christian evolution Christ is the goal. He is, too, the inspiration for reaching that goal. He is the Columbus who brings us to a new world. "We do not know what shall be, but we see Jesus"; and we know all things "head up in him." The ancients look back to the golden age but we look ahead.

Jerome quotes from Papias to the effect that Matthew wrote a Gospel in Hebrew. The Greek version, however, has every mark of an original writing. Here is a book of the "Kingdom of Heaven" and in ever increasing circles of divine revelation, God's best man is found in Jesus Christ. From the opening of gospel history, the circle ever widens toward the goal of a redeemed humanity. Messianic salvation is the moving force of all history, and providence prepares the way for the coming King.

The early fathers were of the opinion that this Gospel was the first one written. Modern scholars, for the most part, incline to the belief that Mark has that distinction. The other synoptics, no doubt, drew from Mark, and they all likely drew from documents like "The Logia." The synoptic problems can never be solved, but certainly Matthew is the appropriate door for entrance to the New Testament. The artless unconsciousness in chapter twenty-four points to the non-fulfillment of the destruction of Jerusalem, 70 A. D.

Matthew reminds himself of "the pit whence he was digged," and calls himself "Matthew the publican." His occupation seems to account for the orderly grouping of his subjects and for the method and skill used in his arrangement. Matthew presents Jesus the preacher, and we find the sermons of Jesus recorded in this Book. In the broad sense, order is shown in the grand division at chapter 16:16, where for the first time church (Ecclesia) meaning "called out" is found. The Kingdom in the original sense seems to fade from view, and the Church henceforth becomes more and more enriched with the ever-deepening and broadening idea of a great spiritual brotherhood in Jesus the Christ. "Called out" from the Jewish theocracy, they went "without the camp" to establish the true Israel, the Church.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

What and where is the Kingdom? The most difficult lesson Jesus tried to teach the early disciples was the nature of the Kingdom. Conceptions concerning it are yet vague. Men who should know better will tell you the Kingdom of Heaven means the visible Church, and if you preach to them about the Kingdom that cometh without observation they give you a vacant stare for your pains. Some will tell you that the Kingdom of Heaven is confined to the written word. For them "the letter killeth." A large number still say the Kingdom of Heaven lies beyond the grave. They confuse the capital of the Kingdom with the Kingdom itself. Study the parables of the "net" and "the tares" and answer whether the good and the bad will be gathered in heaven. "Some say Lo here and some lo there but behold the Kingdom of Heaven is within."

In this world there are two Kingdoms that can never be reconciled. Like light and darkness they cannot dwell in the same heart. In the Sermon on the Mount a hard problem is set for solution. The things of this world are necessary for the children of the Kingdom. In our relations to these things, where is the boundary line of sin? Christ plainly teaches that we may use them but not abuse them. Possess them, but do not be possessed by them. It is no sin to be rich and no virtue to be poor. Sin consists wholly in the wrong attitude toward the world. Anything is sin that mars our vision or dulls our eager quest for the Kingdom. Therefore he concludes: "Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven."

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord." He alone that "looketh on the heart" is able to take vengeance. Jesus makes a reversal of the whole reasoning on this subject. The man who injures is the man who is injured. The stricken is the struck. The rule Christ gives is not for escaping injury, but for saving the brother who injures you. The turning of the other cheek when smitten, is used as an extreme case to call out by contrast the sin of retaliation. Christ, when smitten, did not turn the other cheek in any literal sense. That would have provoked further insolence. Paul gave sharp rebuke when he was smitten. This is teaching by exaggerated contrast, a strikingly effective way often used by Christ. If taken in a literal sense, Christ seems to teach that we should "hate father and brother," etc., yet nothing is farther from the Christly spirit. The great principle taught is the important thing: "Love your enemies, and bless them that curse you."

XXXV

MARK

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

JOHN, or John Mark, is the name given our evangelist by the author of the Acts. It was to his mother's house in Jerusalem that Peter came after the latter's release from prison. Mark went as an attendant with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. Because he left them at Perga and returned to his home, Paul was unwilling to overlook the desertion, and separated from Barnabas while the latter, with his kinsman Mark, sailed away to Cyprus. Paul's confidence in Mark must have been restored as the former writes from prison in Rome that Mark was one of the three or four who remained a comfort to him and a "fellow worker" with him. Later he wrote to Timothy: "Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is useful to me for ministering."

Mark's mother must have owned a large house in Jerusalem, and frequent meetings of the early disciples were held there. Mark met Matthew and the other evangelists there. It was there Peter came when released from prison—there the "last supper" was eaten and the scenes of Pentecost were witnessed. Simon Peter, we are sure, was a frequent visitor to this home, and made a deep impression on the young disciple. We are not surprised that Mark followed him to Rome, and we can well believe the account that, at the instance of the Roman Christians, he wrote down the words recounted by Peter, while in prison the latter awaited his death.

Mark writes for the Roman, and his desire is to impress him with the mighty power of Jesus and to drive him to conclude that He must be the Son of God. In other words, He is the Son of Man with power, and in this we find our key. Mark wrote under the direction and influence of Peter. Peter was temperamentally objective, not subjective, and here we have an objective Gospel. In his epistles, Peter calls him "Mark, my son."

The choice of a lion for a symbol of Mark is very fitting. In his style is seen the stern, close cunning of the eye, the biding of the time for a crushing blow, the majestic pose, and through it all, a mighty energy and a royal power that brooks no blocking of the road. Peter in his epistles says the devil is a roaring lion, and tries to impersonate the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He tells Cornelius that "the devil goeth about seeking whom he may devour." In contrast to this, "Jesus goeth about doing good."

Mark's energetic style and dominant spirit are suited for the Roman to whom the message is directed. Seizing on the main point he disdainfully rejects the subordinate, not forgetting details that add graphic and human interest to the narrative. It is a Gospel of the acts of Christ, a Gospel of this real world, a Petrine Gospel. He has no room for the Sermon on the Mount, and room only for four of the parables, but he makes room for eighteen miracles. He makes no attempt to preach long sermons like Matthew, nor write in easy flowing elegance like Luke, nor to delve into the deep philosophies like the mystic John, but in vividness, dramatic power and energy he surpasses either of them. Driving straight to the point, "straightway" is used forty-one times. Such momentous facts as miracles of healing, triumph over demons, and the resurrection of the dead "make the people rush together," and to "tremble with joy" and "trample one on the other." In Matthew we have didactic discourse; in Mark, energetic action. An earthquake of divine power shakes the whole world, but you must draw your own conclusions as to what it all means.

Characteristic of this Gospel are the words of the closing chapter: "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified; he is risen." He means to say He is a Son of man and born among men, further He is a King among men, yea, He is a God that breaks the bonds of death and the grave.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

We see the great multitudes trampling on one another in attempt to touch Jesus, and we hear the wild cry of the demons: "Thou art the Son of God." On the march to Jerusalem and to death, Mark alone tells us that, "Jesus went before, and they were amazed, and they that followed him were afraid." What a picture is that! Jesus walks before them. A mysterious influence pervades the awful silence. Jesus is in the lead and faces the dark valley of the cross and a shameful death; yet it is not He, but His followers that are afraid. The heroic majesty of His holiness enthralls their hearts and hushes them to awe, and even into trembling fear. His cross was the throne of a King, His crucifixion the death of a hero; and at least one Roman exclaimed: "Truly this was the Son of God."

Mark then was true to his aim and did his work well. The Roman cared nothing for their holy parchments or mystic philosophy. They are interested only in this man Jesus, a troublesome malefactor and Galilean rebel crucified at Jerusalem, thus dying a death that, in the eyes of the Roman, was an unspeakable shame. What is the secret of this mysterious person who, despite all, lives after death in the love and loyalty of His followers? In giving satisfactory answers to these questions in a brief, graphic and practical manner, Mark clears the besmirched name of Jesus and wipes away the stigma of the cross.

The other Gospels have an idea touching Christ to the working out of which other facts of the narrative must contribute. Matthew must present the Messiah who is the consolation of Israel; Luke the Saviour, who meets the needs of humanity; John the God, sufficient for eternity. Not so with Mark. He is a chronicler, a faithful reporter who writes the facts as he sees them and feels them. "Thus the gospel of history is followed by the history of the Gospel." All his recorded miracles show the mighty power of the Nazarene carpenter, who is the God with whom all things are possible. There is no tracing of the genealogy of Jesus Christ from Abraham and David as in Matthew who wrote for the Jew to show how the new order will displace the old theocracy, nor from Adam, as in Luke, to identify Him with humanity. He does not come in form of a little babe as in the other two synoptics, but is ushered in as a full grown man. His march through the world is filled with hosannas, and ended in the triumph of the resurrection. If a look of majestic love drove Peter weeping from the judgment hall, and sent Mark in nakedness fleeing from Gethsemane, will you, O sinner, withstand that same pleading love that beams from the thorn-crowned face of Jesus of Nazareth?

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

It is illuminating to know that Papias, a bishop of Phrygia, 120 A. D., says he made it his business to "make inquiry of the elders." His report is that: "Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately all that he remembered (not in order) the words and deeds of Christ." From the fact that he records the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and does not give account of its fulfillment is pretty conclusive evidence that it was not written before the fall of that city, 70 A. D. As Peter was martyred about 64 A. D., it is natural to suppose the felt need of the apostle's words in writing must have been supplied shortly afterward, say 65 A. D. By most scholars, Mark is thought to be the oldest Gospel, but I am not going to enter that endless discussion of the synoptic problem. My simple aim is to get the viewpoint of the author, some of the circumstances and somewhat of the purpose.

His style is unique. There is something militant in his movements, as with short-sword he double quicks through sixteen short chapters. "Straightway" and "immediately" are his words that crack like a whip on the sharp voice of the Petrine fisherman, through the flying sprays of the sea storm. It has every appearance of not having been written in a quiet study, like Luke's Gospel or John's, but jotted down on the run. He is rich in things circumstantial, and gives place, time and numbers. The disciples went "two and two"; the people "sat down in ranks, by hundreds and fifties"; the swine ran into the sea, "about two thousand," etc., etc.

He has preserved for us the gestures and feelings of Christ. He is "moved with compassion"; He looked on them "with anger"; "looking up to heaven"; "he took little children in his arms." Some of the characteristic words are "wonder," "amazement" and "awe."

John the Presbyter says Mark did not write "in order." We have difficulty in reconciling this with the fact that the present Gospel is well arranged. Either the presbyter was mistaken, or some later editor has put it in order. In addition to the report of Papias, just noted, Clement tells us that at the request of a large number who had heard Peter at Rome, Mark wrote down the words of that apostle as he heard and remembered them. This earlier document of "notes," to which "not in order" might apply, may have elicited this criticism of the presbyter. In the grand divisions, Mark gives the account first of Christ's ministry in Galilee, next in the North, then in Perea and lastly, the journey to Jerusalem, and the closing scenes. These larger divisions are more or less distinctly arranged in smaller sections.

While he has only about forty words and fifty verses not found in Matthew or Luke, we find his peculiarities in his omissions and in his originality and graphic details. The reader doubtless is aware that the closing verses of this Gospel are not found in the best manuscripts. Other striking omissions are found where he refuses to follow Judas into the dark or even to note the healing of the ear of Malchus. However, he follows Christ into the wilderness fight with the wild beasts, and scans the faces of the leaders for cause of the awe that settles on the little company. To make scenes real, he used the words of Christ in the mother tongue, such as "Boanerges," "Corban," "Abba." He uses ten Latin words and many Latin idioms. The references to ceremonial customs such as washing of hands, the passover, etc., would have been unnecessary had he been addressing the Jews, so would have been the fact that the Mount of Olives is "over against the temple" and that the river John baptized in was the "Jordan."

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

The Book opens with a graphic account of John the Baptist. Where shall we find a more magnanimous and unselfish soul? Great multitudes waited on John's ministry, yet he dared to say, "one mightier than I cometh after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am unworthy to unloose." He dared in the face of death to walk to the end of duty's path, and tracking the stream of Israel's sin he bearded the lion in his den. Leaving the temple, whose worship had degenerated into soulless legalism, he sought the wilderness that he might stand half-way between the temple and the Church, the law and the Gospel. Have you, my brother, like John the Baptist, cowering to no earthly foe and compromising with no earthly sin and unbound by the trammels of the purely external in religion, gone forth to prepare the way of Christ to the hearts of men? Oh, what a sin that stilled that lion heart! What a base fear that silenced such a tongue! It is far better to live with staggered faith and broken heart in jail than with lust of the flesh and murderous soul to dance in a palace.

"Jesus of Nazareth" is a favourite expression of Mark. He presents Him amidst the trivialities and the sublimities of life. Jesus is the earthly name and Nazareth the despised village, but only a God could faultlessly react to all these phases of our human life as He did. Leaving the multitude behind, He scaled the serene heights of thought only to return from the transfigured mount with a heavenly pattern to be realized in the plane of a world of sin and hate. Other philosophers and teachers were sons of the times and nations to which they belonged. Not so with Jesus of Nazareth. He is neither Greek nor Jew nor Roman, but overleaping all boundary lines of time and place, He is received by all men as a brother of humanity in all ages. Other men were influenced by the lure of gold or a lust of power; He refuses the crown of a King and amidst the hosannas of a multitude He stoops to bless the blind beggar.

> "Specimens of humanity were sections of a sphere,
> Caught in dim outline by the vision of a seer."

It is not a Roman Christ Mark presents, but a world Christ to the Roman world. "Whosoever will, let him come." He is "all and in all," the complete satisfaction of the yearning hope of a lost world. If the Roman, as he stands on the desolate ruins of a fallen empire, will but hail his conqueror as a rightful King, he will voice the earnest of the nations and file his claims of citizenship in a triumphant and everlasting Kingdom.

XXXVI

LUKE

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

IN addition to the proofs of its genuineness shared with the other synoptics, this Gospel has the attestation from Marcion, the rich ship-builder and scholar of Pontus, who joined the society of Christians at Rome, 140 A. D., and made them a gift of a munificent sum of money. After he was excluded from the Church for heterodoxy and his money had been returned to him, he established a new system closely akin to Gnosticism. He brought to Rome ten of Paul's epistles and a mutilated version of our present Gospel of Luke.

Luke's familiarity with the Antioch Church leads us to believe that he was a Greek convert of that Church. Paul sends greetings to the Colossian Church from "Luke, the beloved physician." Though our author has given us "The Acts," containing the only history we have of the early Christian Church, and this great Gospel of Luke, and was above most a close associate of Saint Paul, his name is mentioned only three times in the Scriptures. The spirit and style of Paul are very marked in all his writings. Mark is no more Petrine than Luke is Pauline. He is so precise in nautical terms that it has been conjectured that he was a ship physician. He was with Paul at Troas, Philippi, Corinth, Jerusalem and Cæsarea. He stayed by Paul during his two years' imprisonment at the latter place, was with him on his journey to Rome, shipwrecked with him at Malta; and the apostle, writing from his prison at Rome, said, "Only Luke is with me." The only other mention of Luke is found in Philemon, where Paul calls him a "fellow labourer." Speaking broadly, the summary is: Preface, Nativity, The Baptist, The Galilean Ministry, Christ's Last Journey to Jerusalem, and the Last Week.

He addresses his narrative to Theophilus, a man of princely blood and fortune. The immediate intention of Luke was to present to him and his circle the claims of Christianity, basing his appeal on the faithful history of Jesus, the Saviour of all mankind. Thus is this Gospel addressed to one person because, of all the Gospels, the universal one. In this we find the key. The Jesus of Luke is not only the Jewish Messiah as in Matthew, but also the redeemer of all mankind. Not so much the great miracle worker and Son of God found in Mark, but the Saviour of the lost of every class, condition and nation.

The Sermon on the Mount is not given for the purpose of showing the new kingdom's fulfillment of the old order. The genealogy of Jesus is traced not from David, as in Matthew, but from Adam, representative of the whole race. Other Gospels may tell us of the choosing of the twelve that represent the twelve tribes of the old dispensation; this Gospel tells us of the sending out of the "seventy," which finds its analogy in the seventy heathen peoples of the then known world. The object seems to be to bridge between the Jewish Christian and the Gentile Christian, and to end a war sharp and bitter at this time. In all this we can read the Pauline idea. He begins his narrative with Christ as a babe and ends with an account of Jesus carried up into heaven. And "they worshipped him" as a God. He traces the growth of the Kingdom from a divine origin to a divine perfection.

Luke quotes little from the Old Testament and that save as he catches the sound of trickling waters of salvation in the dim past; only to follow its course flowing through the years like a river in a thirsty land.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

As we have indicated, Luke presents Christ as the

Saviour of all mankind. The word of the Old Testament is guard, but of the New it is spread. In no other writing is the world Redeemer set forth in more beautiful simplicity as a seeker of the lost. It is in Luke's Gospel alone that we hear our Saviour proclaiming: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (4:18). Matthew may tell us of Christ as a mighty teacher; Mark may give us a vivid account of His Lordship, and John of His mystic glory, but Luke portrays Christ as the comfort of the sorrowing, the friend of the outcast; and he alone completes the prophecy of Isaiah that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

He enshrines forever in memory the purity and beauty of infancy, the glory and tenderness of womanhood, and the heart-breaking cry of the poor and needy. Tradition says he was a painter, and who has ever painted for us a more appealing Christ? Until Christ came, woman was a chattel and a slave; all ancient history had ignored childhood; the poor had slight consideration. Read again Luke's story of the widow of Nain, the delicate reference to the secret thoughts of Elizabeth and Mary. Look in again upon that lovely domestic scene in the home of Mary and Martha; come to the death march to Calvary; hear the broken-hearted weeping of the women, and the compassionate Saviour say, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me." For all these delicate touches of the portrait of Jesus we owe to Luke, the Painter.

It is he alone who paints John the Baptist as a babe, the incident of the Annunciation, fills the sky with the heralding angels, the solemn ceremonies of the circumcision of the babe Jesus, the Presentation in the temple, and His confirmation as a boy of twelve. The Annunciation is not to the high priest of the temple nor to the king of the palace, but to a young girl of the poor at the little village of Nazareth. The angel choir sang not for the rich and the elite, but for the humble "shepherds abiding in the field and watching over their flocks by night." We read nothing here of the rich and powerful holding the infant Jesus in their arms, but that honour is reserved for old Simeon and the aged Anna, rich only in the "hope of the consolation of Israel." A childhood Gospel, it is thus "perpetuating the paradise of innocency in a sinful world." Read again the story of the rich fool, of Dives and Lazarus, the great supper of "the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind." All these faithful pictures of the loving, tender, pathetic Christ are peculiar to the inspired genius of this remarkable painter, Saint Luke.

Here then is a Christ who protects womanhood, cherishes childhood and gives blessing to the poor. Read the fifteenth chapter, of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money and the most beautiful story in the world, the story of the prodigal son, and learn how this Jesus of Saint Luke's Gospel came to seek and to save the lost.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

From the mention of "many" writers that came before him, his treatment of common tradition and particularly from his interpretation of Christ's discourse in chapter twenty-one as relating rather to the siege of Jerusalem than to the end of the world, we justly conclude that he must have written sometime after the other synoptics, perhaps as late as 80 A. D. His name has been connected with three New Testament writings: Luke, Acts and Hebrews. That he wrote the first two there can be no doubt, but that he wrote Hebrews is mere conjecture. When we consider the large amount of material peculiar to Luke, we conclude that he must have drawn from a source not known to either Mark or Matthew.

There are six miracles and eleven parables not found in either of the other Gospels. From the fact that Luke and Matthew have so much not found in Mark, we infer that they had access to some writing, such as "the Logia," not used by Mark. According to Dr. Reuss, of the one hundred and twenty-four sections contained in the total, Luke has thirty-eight peculiar to him, and Mark only two. Reckoned by verses, Matthew has three hundred and thirty-seven verses peculiar to him; Mark, fifty, and Luke, six hundred and twelve.

Luke's graceful turn of sentences, his classical wording and his historical grouping of material, mark the cultivated and well-informed mind. That his vocabulary is rich is seen from the fact that he uses seven hundred words found nowhere else in the New Testament. His terms are full of the flavour of his profession, and his technical medical words are in sharp contrast, often, to the common ones used by the other New Testament writers, to express the same meaning. Easy and flowing and eloquent goes the course of the narrative that drew, even from Renan, the words: "A beautiful narrative, well contrived, at once Hebraic and Hellenic, uniting the emotion of the drama with the serenity of the idyl." His "psychologic comments," his many antitheses, his remarkable preface, his chronological order, and his familiarity with the Septuagint prove him a scholar of no mean mind. He is the first Christian hymnologist. His opening chapters contain the Benedictus, or song of Zacharias; the Magnificat, or song of Mary; the Nunc Dimittus, or song of Simeon; the Ave Maria, or the angel's salutation; and the Gloria in Excelsis, or the song of the angels. We have shown how he has given us the gospel of womanhood, of childhood, of the poor and of the lost. His is also the gospel of prayer; giving us the words of our Lord's prayer at His baptism and His cross. He alone tells us of the all-night prayer before the call of the twelve, and invests it with a peculiar glory at the transfiguration. He alone gives us the prayer of the dying thief, and the prayer of the commendation of His own spirit into His Father's hands. Replete with glad tidings from the song of the Annunciation to the Ascension from Olivet, it is not to be wondered that Renan has called Luke's Gospel "the most beautiful writing in the world."

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

The catholicity of our Lord's spirit ushers in a new era. Here is a gospel of grace and mercy. Jewish intolerance is rebuked and peoples of despised races are welcomed. "Good will to men" is the opening song. Who can estimate the worth of the story of the man among thieves, whom the hierarchy of the Jewish Church pass by and the despised Samaritan stoops to aid? The lesson is just as good to-day. Why do you ask the questions: "Does he belong to our church?" "Is he a member of our lodge?" "Does he belong to my social circle?" Why have such terms as "dago," "sheeny," "greaser," etc., come into our language? Who goes from the circles of silk to the rags of the slums? Yes, you do, and you call it "slumming." You pat yourself on the back and, as in the scaling of a mountain, you call that another feat performed. An erring woman can step over a precipice, but, under the present order of society, she cannot step back again. In conventional society that is the unforgivable sin. Why the double standard of purity? In the gospel of forgiveness there is neither male nor female. Where do you find a more striking picture than that of the poor shamed and shrinking woman dragged into the presence of Jesus by those brutal men? Their pockets bulging with rocks and their cheeks with self-conceited pride, they forgot they were in the presence of a judge "that knows no respect of person" and that searches the heart. Oh, the silence that followed! Can't you feel it even now? He stooped down and wrote in the sand: "He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone." Jesus broke down the partition walls and abolished all castes between nations.

Amidst the hosannas of the multitude He stoops to help the beggar. In the triumphal march He turns aside to weep over Jerusalem. He met Intolerance with a sword and her victims with tears and aid. He turns aside from the breathless servants of Jairus, the lord of the castle, to the poor, wretched, friendless woman with the loathsome disease. The dazzle of gold never blinded His eyes, nor did the conventions of society tie His tongue.

He is the honour guest in the home of the mighty Simon. When the helpless outcast woman cast herself at His feet, we can see the self-righteous becoming ceremonially unclean. Not so Jesus. We hear the sharp, keen words that punctured his pride: "I have somewhat to say to you, Simon." When we read this Gospel aright there is left in our hearts an unfading picture of that matchless life that with a charm of compelling sweetness lures us from the wrong and gives us dreams of that higher selfhood revealed in Christ. What melting compassion for the multitude! What a mighty protection for womanhood! What a tender love for little children! What a champion for the weak and the poor! What a flood of light He pours upon the path that leads up to the listening ear of a loving Heavenly Father! No wonder that at His baptism "heaven was opened." Those gates have been ajar ever since. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

XXXVII

JOHN

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

JOHN, the author of the fourth Gospel, is the son of Zebedee and Salome. The latter, with little doubt, was the sister of Mary, the mother of our Lord. Hence, John was a cousin of Jesus. He was a native of Galilee, and most likely of Bethsaida near Capernaum. From the fact that his father as a fisherman had hired servants, and that Salome supported Jesus with her substance, and further, that John had later his own house in Jerusalem, we conclude the family had considerable worldly means.

He was the youngest and best loved of all the disciples. He lived the longest and wrote the latest Gospel, and the most wonderful productions of the literary world. The father must have died before the time of the crucifixion. At any rate, it is here we have the last glimpses of the mother. She, with her two sons, James and John, and with her sister Mary, very likely lived some years in Jerusalem in John's house.

In early life his fiery zeal caused him to rebuke any that would dare attempt a good work and follow not with the little band. He and his brother would call down fire on the Samaritans, and take the highest seat in the kingdom. These early traits of character that drew from Jesus the name, "Sons of Thunder," were in after life sanctified by the influence of their meek and lowly Master. It was James and John, who, with Peter, became the trusted three, the inner circle of the apostolic band. John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and who leaned on His breast at the last supper. He forsook not his Lord, but entered the judgment hall, and was found standing under His cross to receive that tender token of Christ's love and confidence: "Son, behold thy mother."

Omitting the futile and sufficiently answered contention that he did not write this Gospel, let us ask the purpose for which it was written. Is the purpose to confute the heretical Cerinthus and the Nicolaitanes, to the effect that the human Jesus is a distinct and separate person from the eternal Christ? Or is it conciliatory, and written for the purpose of reconciling the warring elements of the religion of that time? Or, lastly, was it given to complete the narrative found in the synoptics? We could not accept either of these theories without qualification. In his remarkable prologue he distinctly states his aim: "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life in his name." "Life," "Love," "Light" are his favourite words. The world is dead without the first, brutish without the second, and in chaos without the third. These wondrous blessings come alone through Jesus, the Son of God. Thus "Light," "Love," "Light," as found in Jesus, is the key. This Gospel is directed to believers. Accepting Him as Christ, the Son of God, brings to the believer communion with God, the dawn of day and a full, rich life in Him.

The message might well be called "Darkness routed by Light." The two general divisions are: 1, Christ's revelation of Himself to the world; 2, Christ's revelation of Himself to His disciples. The summary might be given as follows:

THE PROLOGUE

His revelation to the world
  1. By John the Baptist;
  2. By testimony and signs;
Conflict between Christ and the Jews.

The purpose of His coming was to bring "Light." From Logos of the prologue to the divine and conquering testimony of the epilogue, there is found the glory of the Son of God, who is the "Light of the world."

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

Christ is God, and God is love, and love manifests itself in light and life. This is the glory of Christ, that truth has become personal through Him and life is glorified by His grace. These are the great theses presented by John, the spiritual philosopher. Thus realism and idealism meet in the person of Christ, and efficiently answer Gnosticism on the one hand and Ebionism on the other. The narrative of Christ's beginning is not from Abraham, as in Matthew, or from Adam, as in Luke. There is no beginning of Christ. "In the beginning was the Word," but the "Word" did not begin there. A long step it seems from earthly genealogies to a boundless eternity. In Matthew and Luke, Jesus gradually develops from a helpless babe; but in John's record He steps out full grown, and with the authority of a King says, "follow me." This then is not a kingdom of force which Christ establishes, or He would have ridden a war charger into Jerusalem; would not have rebuked the use of the sword, but at His arrest would have called "Twelve legions of angels." The ranks of His army were to be filled with men, "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

The unplumbed depths of eternal truth in Christ is set forth in the prologue, and is used as a basis for a full display of the life and love and light through the Logos, the Son of God. Through the Logos, this manifestation is made through John the Baptist, the disciples and the "signs" and "works," and finally by the testimony of the "Holy Ghost." He proclaims Himself "the Light of the world"; then, by the raising of Lazarus, "The resurrection and the Life." John saw to it that there should be no break in this great revelation, but like Matthew, he harks back, and vitally connects it up with all the past, revealing Jesus not only as the Son of God but as the Christ, the Messiah of the Jews.

John's Gospel is the Gospel of the Incarnation. "He was made flesh and dwelt among us." From across the sacred, divinely recorded ages, Matthew welcomes the Messiah; from the carpenter shop, Mark greets the Son with power on missions of mercy, while Luke greets the Saviour of the lost. John, in deep meditation, dwells on the secret presence of His person, and philosophizes in mystic wonderment on the vital union He holds with His disciples. His Gospel is the exposition of the God-man. Christ alone has traveled the road from all eternity, but divested Himself of divine privileges, and walked the dusty roads of the earth life, grew weary and thirsty and hungry.

For His purpose, the allegory rather than the parable suits His teaching and "signs" and "deeds," rather than the miracle.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

There are many things contributing toward the enrichment of these original and deeply spiritual Johannine writings; such as the age in which he lived and wrote, the privileged experiences from which he drew, and the close intimacy and love of his Lord that inspired him. Then may we not with reason believe that the presence of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in his house did much to make this what Luther calls it: "One tender, leading Gospel."

John was of a mystical turn of mind, while Peter was impulsive, demonstrative and practical. Not one of the synoptic writers would have given us the Nicodemus conversation nor the High Priestly prayer.

Then let us keep in mind the late age in which John wrote. There were no Judaizing questions as in Peter's time, nor questions of law as in Paul's time, but there was a far subtler thing, called Gnosticism, that came insinuating itself into the very heart of the Church to steal away its divine light. While John is not a polemic, nor a heretic hunter, and while he spoke as impelled by the spirit, the great message of God manifest in the flesh, the results that followed were the effective teaching of the eternity of Christ, the "Logos," who "was in the beginning with God."

While John seems to take for granted the reader's knowledge of many important incidents given by the synoptics, and passes in silence many other things, it is to John that we owe the accurate account of Christ's Judean ministry that completes the Christological view of His earthly life. We have those wonderful discourses that reveal the deep things of Christ and His self-revelation. Such are: that remarkable conversation with Nicodemus on the mystery of the new birth; that with the woman at the well, on the source of spiritual life, and the omnipresence of God; and the discourse occasioned by the healing of the sick man of Bethesda; and those heaven-illumined allegories wherein Christ is in turn "Bread," "Light," "Door," "Shepherd," "Way," "Truth," "Vine," "Life," etc.

His miracles have a spiritual meaning easily found and are "signs"; five of the eight he records are peculiar to this Gospel. It is consistent with the character of his Gospel that his miracles should be miracles of knowledge. So that it is not so much extensively as intensively that he supplements the Gospel. If John has no Sermon on the Mount upon which the great ethical principles of the Kingdom is based—Matthew has no such dramatic conversations as we have just noted in which are stated the Kingdom's essential elements. It has been suggested that as John had his own house in Jerusalem more than likely he was the only auditor, being his Lord's host as well as His biographer.

Of this Gospel by John the "rounding up and completion" cannot, from the very nature of the case, be stated. In addition to the simpler hints we have noted, let us add that he has given us precious knowledge on the nature of God, His spirituality, His life-giving power, His name as "Father" and above all that "God is love."

We cannot enter into the discussion of the harmony between the synoptics and John's Gospel. Suffice it to say, John is the philosopher who shows us the synthesis between the scenes and the acts of the synoptic drama. More precious still, John is the bosom disciple of our Lord, and this latest and most loving of all the apostles gives us the last whispered message of Him who "spake as never man spake."

When John left Jerusalem and took up his abode at Ephesus is not known. Tertullian tells us that in the interval the apostle came to Rome; and being cast into a cauldron of oil was miraculously preserved, and afterward banished to the isle of Patmos. Here he wrote the Book of Revelation. No dates are given, but from here he was allowed to return to Ephesus where he organized the churches of Asia. Jerome recounts how, in his old age, John was carried into the pulpit, and was constantly repeating, "Little children, love ye one another." His disciples asked him why he wearied them by the "same words oft repeated." He said: "That is the precept of the Master, and if that is done that alone is sufficient." At the age of about one hundred years he passed to his reward. The legend persisted to a late date that he still lived, and, in a true sense, he does live, not only in heaven but on earth.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

Christ is God and God is love. Who can sound the depths of this eternal mystery? You can measure a field and locate the boundary lines of a nation but who can measure love? Where will you set your Jacob staff? Where will you find your line tree? It is the central gem of the Gospel, and no other writer has given us so many settings of its beauty, or turned for us so many facets of its glory. If God is love, and Christ is God, and Christ is in that close and vital union with His children as set forth by the "vine and the branches," what joy to know that we draw our spiritual power from a source so free and exhaustless!

No true religion or morality can exist apart from that union. Love undergirds the business world. They tell us that a "loss of confidence" causes a panic. Loss of confidence is caused by the loss of trustworthiness, and that goes with the loss of integrity, or moral character. What produces the latter but the sanctioning power of Jesus Christ? Look about you and see where the rich nations are. What is known as the "Christian world" holds practically all the wealth of the world. Love is the heart of the Christian religion, and is the stabilizing force, not only of the commercial world but of the social world. Love whispers its message to employer and to the employee, which tends to reduce them to the common level of a great brotherhood, the bonds of which become stronger as the eleventh commandment becomes more binding. Profits no longer blot out the human soul, and the golden rule eliminates "eye service." Social service finds in the presence of Christian love its skylight of a heavenly hope, and its effectiveness as well as its permanency. Love lightens work. It is no task or burden to minister to mother, because love is behind it. "Love first dreamed of immortality. There was a time when I was not, there is a time when I am. Who shall say there will be a time when I will not be?" It is as eternal and undying as God, for "God is love."

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Symbol	Man	Lion	Ox	Eagle
To Whom?	Jews	Romans	Gentiles	Christians
Time	Past	Present	Future	Eternity
Literary	Preacher	Chronicler	Historian	Philosopher
Jesus	Messiah	King	Saviour	Logos
Genealogy of Christ	Abraham		Adam	God

If you will read closely the characteristics I have given of the four Evangelists, this little arrangement will give you easy reference. The questions relating to each Book are: What is the symbol? To whom was it written? In nature of the Book how related to time? In literary character how related to the author? How is Jesus represented? What is the genealogy of Jesus?

XXXVIII

ACTS

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

ACTS as originally used meant simply a biographical sketch. Luke did not name the Book "Acts of the Apostles." St. James and St. John get very scant notice, while the names of Stephen and Philip and Barnabas, who are not apostles, are made prominent. More than half the space is given to St. Paul, but only a partial account of his many adventures receive notice. The history of the apostles recorded here is only incidental to the controlling aim of the author. We may well ask, What is that aim? Undoubtedly it is to set forth the origin and marvelous growth of the Christian Church through witnesses empowered by the Holy Ghost.

Now Luke is an historian; and history gives faithful record of events rather than the philosophy of their cause. Some would call the treatise "Achievements of the Holy Ghost"; but the Holy Ghost can achieve nothing except through human personality. "Witness" then must be the key to the Book. Skillfully omitting things not to the purpose, the author gives in an orderly way the salient points in the labours of each witness who stands prominent in the marking of the epochs of growth in the newly organized Christian Church.

Up to and including the twelfth chapter, Peter is the chief witness; and from there on to the end Paul has that distinction. With reference to the growth of the Church the first half is given to the growth of the Church in Judea, and the last half to that of the Gentile world.

At the first meeting of the apostles, Peter proposed that they fill the place made vacant by Judas, "because." said he, "one must be ordained to be a witness with us."

A little later to the multitudes he said: "Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses" (2:32). Again, at Solomon's porch he boldly upbraids the murderers of the "Prince of Life" and repeats the words just quoted.

At the conversion of Cornelius, Peter shows this to have been the one thing for which they were called. "And we are witnesses of all things which he did before in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem." In fact this was the only purpose of the baptism of the Holy Ghost upon them. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and in the uttermost parts of the earth."

Coming to the second part of the Book, where Paul is the central figure, see Ananias vesting him with credentials from the "God of our Fathers," and all because "thou shalt be his witness unto all men" (22:15). But Paul had received his authority from a higher source. In that marvelous midday experience when the light above the brightness of the sun blazed round about him and he fell to the earth, he exclaimed: "Who art thou, Lord?" and the answer came, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness" (26:16).

All through this thrilling narrative we note this indomitable purpose on the part of these witnesses. On the day of Pentecost they are witnessing in all the tongues of earth, because the tongues of lambent flame had stood over them in the upper room. The next two chapters tell us of the cure of the lame man and the death of Ananias and Sapphira, the persecution of the witnesses and the wise counsel of Gamaliel. The next scene is the election of the deacons that the witnesses might give all their time to the one "purpose." Then comes the story of Stephen stoned as he looks steadfastly into heaven, witnessing to his last breath.

The great persecution breaks in fury and blood, and they are scattered, witnessing as they go. Philip overcomes Samaria by his testimony, and another epoch is made in the conversion of the eunuch. A greater epoch yet is the conversion of Saul, a citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia, as he was on his way to persecute the new sect, afterward "called Christians at Antioch." This mighty man Paul, in the years ahead, was to direct the thought life and systematize the doctrines of the Christian Church. The account is given in chapter nine, but, strange to say, no mention is made of his retirement to Arabia. His boldness of speech endangered his life at Damascus, and the disciples "let him down by the wall in a basket." Little did these men know that on that rope hung the destiny of nations. On this incident also the Acts is silent.

Thanks to Barnabas, who shielded him from the suspicions of the Church at Jerusalem, he escaped to Tarsus. Some name this his "second retirement," which we are sure was a campaign of giving testimony to the wonderful things that had happened to him, and preaching the risen Lord to his home town and country.

Peter in the meantime is rejoicing in the reception of the Gentiles into the Church. Barnabas finds such an interest in the Church at Antioch that he "departed to Tarsus for to seek Saul." Returning, they two conducted a year's revival and shifted the capital of the new faith from Jerusalem to Antioch. From the Gentile city radiated influences that lighted torches of faith all over the known world, account of which we defer that we may speak of the Christology of the Book.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

Only a short time ago these men who left all to follow Him, had high hopes of political glory in the King of the Jews, "who should restore Israel." Who can tell of the change of attitude toward their King that has now come? These messengers of Jesus did not "sit on thrones" or march and gleam in regimentals. They trudged in drab clothing, with no pomp and power of earthly state, but held above their heads the shining cross, glorified by the risen and ascended Lord. If we can see Him through the eyes of these couriers of Christ we go far toward interpreting the message of Acts under the true light.

"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach." Consulting the original Greek, we find that many have misconstrued the meaning here. Luke does not say that these witnesses are to finish what Jesus began, but that Jesus Himself will continue His work. Only through the hands and tongues of His disciples, however, can He continue His work and teach His truth. They believed the promise, "I will be with thee always." Luke meant to say, "I told you the things He did and taught while in the flesh, now I will resume the narrative and tell you of the things He has done and taught since His ascension."

That Jesus was a real presence with Peter and John, they did not question. They said to the lame man: "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk." When Jesus was laid away in the tomb, the disciples went sorrowfully back to their homes in Galilee; they took hope that He was the Messiah "who should redeem Israel." Their minds began to clear of a materialistic idea of an earthly king; and the fulfillment of prophecy that He would come in the clouds of Heaven to sit as spiritual judge at the right hand of God, took full possession of them. They returned to Jerusalem the symbol of the crumbled vestige of materialistic hopes that still lingered with them. The fact that the infant Church worshipped regularly in the synagogue, and "Jesus Christ of Nazareth," while mentioned often in the Gospels, appears three times only and in the opening chapters of Acts, shows still a faint localizing tendency.

The forty days' appearances, the Holy Ghost baptism, the Peter-Cornelius experiences and the Antioch revival gradually broadened their vision, enabling them to see Jesus as the risen Lord, heralding through them the glad news to the Gentile world, regardless of race or place, however despised or sacred.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

The opening verse attests the authenticity of the Book. Some writer who gave us the third Gospel gave us the "Acts." The style of literary unity, the accuracy of knowledge of political conditions, given incidentally, and especially the archæological evidence drive hostile critics like Renan, and Pauline scholars like Ramsey, to agree that Luke has given us the only credible history of the apostolic Church.

As we take up the widening consciousness and the evolution of thought of the early Church, let us again give warning that of course while we accept the dynamic rather than the static view, we must acknowledge the permanent elements and, also, that this development is not always gradual or continuous. As in nature we have catastrophe, so in history we have revolution.

Beginning at Pentecost, through the period of Stephen's preaching and to the end of the council of the apostles, we have what amounts to a revolution in the consciousness of the followers of Jesus. Yet deep in that consciousness there must have lain the clearly expressed purpose of Jesus to rise from the tomb, ascend to His Father and come again in the person of the Holy Ghost. Hence we find here both the elements of change and of permanency.

The time of the writing is a much mooted question. Why the abrupt close, namely, that Paul "dwelt two years in his own hired house" etc.? Did Luke contemplate another treatise never written, or has it been lost, or did he die during the Neronic persecution, or, as some say, is it an ending natural to the purpose of the writer? We shall never know. The reminiscent air of part, and the perspective of the whole period, seems to indicate it was written some years after Paul's death, 68 A. D., perhaps between 70 and 80 A. D. We owe to this perspective view the orderly account of the growth in the apostolic conceptions and the clearly marked stages of advancement made in the Church. Let us keep in mind that the time any Bible book is written and the times represented by the author are very different things. For instance, we know that most of the epistles were written before the Gospels, yet we place in this volume the Gospels first because the times depicted in them are earlier. And let us say here, the same reason for following the order of the canon in the epistles does not obtain. The order in time of the epistles is well known to us, with one or two trivial exceptions; and we shall discuss them in the order of time in which they are written, that we may properly reflect atmosphere, purpose and conditions that called them forth. Now, practically all the epistles were written before Acts, yet we place it first in order, and my purpose is obvious.

With this necessary explanation, let us resume our study of "Progress" as found in Acts. Primitive, free and unformed the Church is viewed in the making. Trying communism for a time, seeking for gifts of healing and gifts of tongues as a permanent possession of the Church, they were feeling their way under divine guidance to the full day of truth. However, that freshness and enthusiasm of divine and human life, we have lost to a large extent except to memory.

A signal epoch came when Peter was taken to task for eating with the Jews. Peter's experience at the house of Cornelius brought conviction that the Gentiles are subjects of salvation. The next question is, whether the Gentile Christians should be required to be circumcised. The problem is brought from Antioch where fierce contention resulted over the matter. In that Jerusalem council, the fate of Christianity is at stake. Peter, James (the Lord's brother) and John agreed to Paul's appeal for freedom from the Jewish law for the Gentiles, and the threatened schism in the Church was avoided. Through the exclusiveness of the Judaic sect and the broadening impulse of the liberalized Christians, the former became a fossil and the latter is conquering the world.

Let us now take up the thread of our narrative laid down at the account of the revival at Antioch (11:26). It was here the brethren received the name "Christians," meant for a stigma, but transfigured into glory that has never dimmed. The Antioch Church grew and prospered and sent alms to Jerusalem. Thus began not only unity and connectionalism in the Church, but works of mercy which have marked it through the years. Persecution breaks out, and James the disciple "is slain with the sword."

Henceforth Paul fills the pages and the two next chapters record the first missionary journey. Paul and Barnabas visited Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. In the fifteenth chapter we have account of the conciliatory council at Jerusalem. A disagreement over Mark separated these two missionaries, and Paul and Silas passed through Syria and Cilicia and finding Timothy at Derbe traversed Phrygia, Galatia and Mysia, arriving at Troas.

Here begins what is called the "we" passages where Luke joins the party. It was here Paul had the call to Macedonia, or Europe. That call was never louder than it is to-day. He founded churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth and Ephesus, returning to Jerusalem (18:22).

In the third missionary journey he revisited Galatia, Phrygia and Ephesus. Here he remained three years; then on to Corinth and overland to Philippi, Troas, Miletus, Tyre, Cæsarea and back to Jerusalem. From Troas, Luke is henceforth his constant companion. In the closing chapters we have an account of the arrest, trial and appeal to Rome, and the shipwreck. The narrative closes with the handing over of the prisoner to the Prætorian prefect, and Paul's lodgment "in his own hired house" in Rome.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

God has always chosen the best furnished men for His work. Saul was a Roman citizen with splendid natural endowment; no doubt, a student of the great school of Tarsus and a pupil of Gamaliel at Jerusalem, the most learned Rabbi of his day. With such natural ability, political advantages, intellectual equipment and Hellenic environment, and baptized with the spirit of Jesus Christ, it is small wonder he made such rich contribution to the world.

Greatness is gauged in many ways, but surely no other man ever showed a more tireless energy, a greater loyalty to his friends, a broader conception of the nature of the Gospel, a more acute mind for close reasoning, and, above all, greater love for the Christ who was "all and in all" to him, than Paul the Roman citizen and, in the best sense, a citizen of the world. Born and bred in an Hellenic community, "a Pharisee of the Pharisees," a devout follower of Christ, he wrote like a Grecian philosopher, set the final boundaries to the Jewish law, and, with a logic on fire, he set forth the spiritual content of divine revelation. No wonder his life and teachings turn the whole worshipful life and thought of the Church into channels in which it has flowed serenely ever since. The things for which he fought are now dead issues, because so completely won; but the great principles of the faithfulness of God and the freedom of man from the excrescences of the law are as applicable now as then.

XXXIX

FIRST AND SECOND THESSALONIANS

THE KEY TO THE BOOKS

PAUL and Silas shortly after escaping from prison established the Church at Thessalonica, now called Salonica, and located on the Ægean Sea. The letter was written from Corinth, whence he had arrived from Athens on a more or less unsuccessful trip. He had heard rumours concerning the Church there that greatly disturbed him, and even while in Athens had sent Timothy to ascertain the facts. The report was, for the most part good, but he recounted how they were greatly excited about "the coming" of Christ. There were two bad results of this expectation of the early return of the Lord. Some were in great distress because believers of loved ones had died and would not, as they thought, be present at the spectacular appearance. Many had left their daily occupations and waited in idleness. Hence the dominant thought of the epistle is the Advent, or the Coming Presence.

Paul and Silas and Timothy indite this epistle to them. It is pathetically personal and tender. A few months afterward they sent another letter covering practically the same ground. As in nearly all Paul's epistles the division of each is:

1. Greeting.
2. Thanksgiving.
3. Doctrinal.
4. Practical.
5. Personal.
6. Salutation.

Paul assures them that those who are alive at the time of the coming or "parousia," will have no advantage over those who now sleep in the grave. He thought it best to add his own autograph, for there had been fictitious letters written with Paul's name forged to them.

His letter is to Gentile believers, and is the only Pauline epistle without a controversial issue. His aim is to comfort these Gentiles who had never had the faintest hope of any haven beyond life's sea. He entreated them to a watchful hope and cheerful vigilance, urging that this expectation should not unnerve them for present duties. Paul's writings seldom take the apocalyptic form, and he was so tragically misunderstood in the first letter in his expression, "We who are alive," that he referred to the Advent only once afterward (1 Cor. 15:23).

In spite of the forceful way he had admonished them "to prove all things," they had been led astray by false interpreters of Paul's words.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOKS

The Christology of the Books is surprisingly advanced, being the first writings of the New Testament. The germs are here of the great doctrines elaborated in later epistles, as in Colossians and Ephesians; naming Jesus as Lord and Christ and especially as Father (1, 1:3–11; 5:28). Jesus is the God of the Old Testament, the God of judgment. Yet He is Father to them that are faithful. Christ will be glorified in His saints (1, 1:8). Still further, He is the Saviour by His death, and the Son of God with power (1:10). The mystic union between Him and His Father creates a source of life for living and dead (1, 4:16). Christ is an object of prayer (3:11); and He with the Father bestows temporal and spiritual blessings (5:18).

The early Church misinterpreted the prophecy of Christ in Matthew 24. The increasing light of time revealed His double meaning. The end of the ages is near, He meant to say, and a new era of history dawns. In great spiritual power, I will come to the world. The temple at Jerusalem will be destroyed, religions of paganism will fall, and the ceremonial laws of Moses will be abrogated. The temple of Jupiter burned in 69 A. D. and the temple at Jerusalem was destroyed 70 A. D. Thus fulfillment came within seventeen years of the prophetic utterance.

Thus, in the primary and true sense, the early Church was not really mistaken. Their uncertainty was in the time of His coming, which Jesus said the angels of heaven were ignorant of. The thing of first importance is "the coming," on which fact they and Paul were agreed. These epistles may lack in spiritual depth, but they have the freshness of the early days. Their radiant hope and holy enthusiasm lack only discipline to steady them, and their docility and mutual love promise much.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOKS

The date of these letters was 52 A. D. and early in 53. Romans is the first in the order of the canon. So far as can be seen there is no reason for so placing it. Under our discussion of that Book you will find our reason for arranging Paul's letters in chronological order. Keep in mind that the date of the Bible books and the times described are not one and the same thing. Hence it is obvious why I place the Gospels and Acts before the epistles. The question had not arisen that drew out Paul's systematic argument, so often called Pauline. On this account some have tried to discredit these letters. Luke called the magistrates of Thessalonica "politarchs." No such word had ever been mentioned in ancient history as applied to that office. In recent times an entablature with that name inscribed was found and sent to the British Museum.

These letters are the earliest specimen of Christian literature extant, and are, most think, the oldest books of the New Testament. They are the greatest of all his epistles, the only ones directed to the Gentiles solely, and the only ones without controversial issue. In no other epistle does Paul assume the rôle of comforter as a prime purpose, and never again that of prophet.

In two ways Paul modifies his expectation of the speedy coming of Christ. A process of history must run its course and that more than likely he would not live long enough to see this spectacular return (2, 2:1–12). In his apocalyptic vision he sees "the man of sin and son of perdition." Who is the "man of sin"? Volumes have been written in answer. Some say it meant a wicked pope, some a Roman emperor, some Luther or Protestantism, some Antiochus. It seems to me he means a false Messiah.

In the closing pointed and pungent words of the first epistle, he says, "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless." Here we have the first recognition of all Scripture that man is a trichotomy, threefold in nature. We do not question Paul's gift of prophecy, but we do question his knowledge of the time of His coming of which the angels were ignorant, and even the Son of man, of this secret held by the Father alone.

The Advent (Parousia) was a common doctrine among the Jews, drawn no doubt from the prophecy of Daniel. Paul greatly enriched it by the infusion of spiritual truth. So far as Scriptural literature is concerned, it marks a new epoch in that the vague hints of the Old Testament, the "dolorous gloom" of Pindar and the rush-light of Socrates, give place to the sunburst from the heavenly world. This spectacular epiphany seems only incidental to the comfort he brings, and the entreaty that they might hold steady, keep pure and busy and watchful.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOKS

Without the restraining and purifying power of gospel truth, it brings to us a sense of shuddering horror as we think of the sudden depths to which a soul may sink. Paul saw here this little band surrounded by the Christless Gentile world, and the temptations that would assail them and possibly drive them to the unspeakable conditions described afterward in his letter to the Romans. What I have said elsewhere, let me repeat. No other sin has upon it a more certain, terrible or signal judgment than the sin of impurity, a judgment that falls heavy and hot, like heated lead, on him who commits the sin, and upon the innocent offspring of the sinner. A sin it is that damns man for this and every other world. The hope for the heathen world is slight as touching this matter, for impurity is often a ceremonial part of their religion. There are sins in the Christian world and sins in the pagan world, but the sins in the pagan world are in accord with their religion, and those in the Christian world are in conflict with the principles of the Christian religion. It is clear that the pagan world must grow worse and worse. Under the radiant purity of our Christ, sin must vanish at last from the redeemed earth.

Paul feared the excitement incident to the spectacular advent they looked for would or had unfitted many for the daily round of duties. Many had left their occupations and folded their arms with a complacent smile, saying, Why lay up goods or make any provision for the morrow? Many went gadding about as "busybodies," giving the willing and unwilling listeners their opinions about the approaching event, and whispering their insinuations about persons who will not "be caught up." Thus idleness brings many demons of injury to the idler and distress to the whole community. The apostle tells them in this second letter that he "eats no man's bread for naught." How he worked day and night that he might not be chargeable to any man during the great famine of that day. A man who unperturbed takes what he does not earn, lacks the stuff from which a noble soul is made.

Watch and be ready; Christ will come to you. You know not how or when. "Be not weary in well doing," and as sure as God never in the past called a lazy man, He will come for you as He did for Gideon threshing his wheat or Elisha plowing his field or to the shepherds minding their flocks. Watch, therefore, but labour on. "Why stand ye here gazing into heaven?"

XL

FIRST AND SECOND CORINTHIANS

THE KEY TO THE BOOKS

PAUL wrote certainly three, and perhaps as many as five, letters to the Corinthian Church. These two extant letters, the first from Ephesus in 57 A. D., and the second from, perhaps, Philippi, a few months later, are the longest and, in a true sense, the greatest of all his epistles. The first letter is the most systematic and the second, the least so, of all his epistles. The first letters passed between him and the Church are now lost. The letter from Corinth is easily reconstructed from Paul's answer to it.

In the more than three years' absence from Corinth he had, through Apollos, Titus, slaves of Chloe, and others, and especially, through the bitter, offensive letter from that church, many questions put up to him for answer. At first glance this first letter appears desultorily written. This, however, is far from the case. In the second epistle there is no such diversity of things; yet written under greater emotion, there are brilliant digressions that make it more difficult to systematize. In no other epistle is Christ, His life and principles, so confidently appealed to for the settlement of all problems of daily life. These principles seem to be the only common denominator of the letters (1, 3:16; 6:15–19).

The conflicting opinions in the Church had reached white heat. Some belonged to the "Paul" party, some to the "Cephus," some to "Apollos" and some to "Christ." We might call these factions, respectively, "aggressive," "orthodox," "philosophic" and "holy." The Christian principle applicable is unity in Christ. "All things are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is

God's" (1, 3:23). Broadly, the first letter may be divided into three parts, namely:

1. Love and unity for their divisions.
2. Application of principles to many matters trivial and otherwise.
3. Expediency touching human life.

The second epistle is a personal explanation, apology and spirited defense of his apostleship, pitched on the high plane of his loyalty to Christ, his founding of the Church and the conservation of the holy interests of the kingdom.

In that remarkable classic on love, given us in 1:13, we have the magic key that unlocks the meaning of the varied vicissitudes of life's relationships. Paul's urgent and tearful plea is that they test these principles in the settlement of the troublesome difficulties in the Corinthian Church.

1. In the matter of factions, try the principle of unity in Christ. Is Christ divided? (1, 1:10–13).
2. In that of the notorious offender, purge out the old leaven, but be in the world and not of it (1, 5:7).
3. In that of lawsuits, remember the brotherhood of Christ (1, 6:6).
4. In that of marriage and impurity, the expulsive power of a holy affection (1, 7:29).
5. In that of meats offered to idols, even the highest and holiest aims, the salvation of the brother (1, 10:33).
6. In that of head covering, a sober seemly expediency (1, 11:2).
7. In that of "speaking with tongues," decency and order, the simplicity of Christ (1, 3:1).
8. In that of the Lord's supper, a holy reverence and spiritual communion with Him who was dead and is alive (1, 11:26).
9. In that of offerings to the poor, obligations are not to men but to Christ and for men. Remember Him who for your sake became poor (2, 8:9).
10. In that of the Resurrection, "God is a spirit," His

Kingdom is a spiritual Kingdom. The identical particles will not be raised. "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body" (1, 15:44).

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOKS

In no other epistle is there such emphasis placed on Christ as the truth, the way and the light. His prologue to each letter is filled with the name of Christ and the light He throws on life's duties. He sets forth His loyalty of apostleship "in Jesus Christ," the Church as "sanctified in Christ Jesus," he calls Him "Lord," the source of grace and the object of prayer and the springs of consolation and sacrifice for sins. The glory of Christ transfigures His saints and gives them a foretaste of the life beyond. In union with Christ we become new creatures in Him, all of which must find its basis on the reconciling work of the sinless Christ (2, 5:17).

In the face of the fierce attacks on his apostolic authorship and grave charges against his character and teachings, with the constant reports of their schisms and grievous sins, his dominant thought of Christ is not as judge, as in Thessalonians, coming in the clouds of glory, but the intimate, tender, comforting, enlightening Christ. The foundation of his preaching in Corinth had been Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1, 2:2). The doctrine of the person of Christ as vitally and indissolubly related to His work, is set forth, as is that of Christ's final subjection to the Father (1, 3:23).

The "Christ" party, composed of those who "knew Christ after the flesh" as opposed to Paul who by his own confession is "not meet to be called an apostle," made audacious attacks on Paul, intensified in the second letter. In the meantime, it seems, another agitator had come to Corinth "preaching another Jesus" (2, 11:4). It is plain to see the question of Christology underlies that of faith and works, not so much shown in direct expression as that this atmosphere breathes through every page.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOKS

Four or five years have intervened between these epistles and those of Thessalonians. In personal reference, passionate intensity, classical eloquence and diversity of topics, these two letters are the greatest of all Paul's extant writings. Those to the Thessalonians are eschatological, but here he has postponed "the coming" and has barely a reference to it. He is doubtful now whether he will live to see that wonderful day.

His historical conception, his awakening consciousness of the Church as an organic whole, his inspired genius and explicit statement in the application of this new philosophy and panacea for spiritual ills, great and small, give exhibition of his enlarged vision of the purpose and the possibilities of the Church. Hence these two letters are ecclesiastical; the first, polemic; the second, apologetic. Paul founded this Church; they are his spiritual children. They are a meager group of poor and unimportant folks in a great, wicked city of four hundred thousand population; "a city," says Chrysostom, "the most licentious of all that are and have ever been." He bares his heart to them; he warns, entreats, instructs; sobs are in his voice; he breaks forth in an irresistible eloquence of woe. It is clear that his sorrow for the sins of this little group is greatly deepened by his awakened sense of their high importance in the divine program for the salvation of this great city, "the star of Hellas" and the "gate of the Peloponnese," a bridge of the sea, over which passed the nations of the earth.

These, however, are not weak and effeminate tears. He boldly speaks forth his mind on many a delicate and difficult topic. "An idol is nothing in the world." Evidently he was never satisfied with the compromise made in the synod of Jerusalem. He pours forth scathing rebuke on the notorious offender. His apostolic authority, so closely bound with that of the Church, is defended with becoming humility but with great spirit.

The "gifts" appear to have been only temporary, and never universal, in bestowment. These spectacular phenomena may have served a good purpose in their time. They appeared only in a kindergarten age. They were for children. "When I became a man," Paul says, "I put away childish things," and he proceeds to show the world "a more excellent way." The world can never repay this apostle for writing the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians into its religious creed.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOKS

Paul never surrendered his right to the support of the Church even when he laboured with his own hands. The shame was on the Church. When we speak of the working man we think only of the man who physically works. Tent-making was a small draft on Paul's strength. The brain-sweat and heart-anguish, the utter loneliness and deep solicitude, took far the heavier toll. No other man in any community gives richer return than does the faithful ambassador of God. In a truer sense than does the Chamber of Commerce stabilize business, in a securer way than does the policeman, he protects the city from crime. In a fundamentally and more permanent sense than the "Law and Order League" of reformers, does the minister bring a recreating force into the natures and consciences of men. A comparison with the school teachers may be odious; but if they bring into the intellectual processes no spiritual and moral fiber for the building of Christian character they do little more than educate the few for the exploitation of the many.

Paul was "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." He was a tower of strength to the weak and fearful. As he said to the distraught sailors on the sinking Alexandrian corn ship, so he said to this capricious, faction-torn Church, "be of good cheer." Deep in this great missionary's soul was an undisturbed joy and peace that gave stay and comfort to all who sailed with him. The early Church has had a kind of aureole thrown about it as if it were a society of angels. All the way back to the garden of Eden, human nature has been pretty much the same. Paul has here the test of his temper and tact. He faced an ugly situation in a very beautiful way. Thrice armed because his cause was just, his poise contributed to his power, and his tact was brought into most effective play.

It is a high art to do a beautiful act in a beautiful way. We are often distressed by a beautiful thing done in an ugly way. Enter Aquila and Priscilla and joy comes in their train. They might have joined the "busybodies" and gossiped about and criticized Apollos, but one of them quietly said to the young eloquent preacher "Come over and spend the night with us and we will talk over the matters of the Kingdom." Thus did this discreet and tactful couple when they took him unto them and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

The criticism of a minister of the Gospel before your children may be disastrous to their moral welfare. When Paul defended his character and apostleship he saw far beyond his own well-being. You take considerable responsibility when you thoughtlessly minify the Church and unjustly criticize her ministry. The Church is the bride of Christ. Let us exalt the Church and magnify the Church. This Church was in a pitiful plight, but the tenderest blessings and the fullest benediction are pronounced over it by the great apostle.

XLI

GALATIANS

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

REGARDING the time of this letter there is sharp division as to the location of the "Galatians." By far the larger number of scholars accept the North Galatian theory as opposed to the Neo or South Galatian one. The purpose and scope of this work forbid any long discussion on this point, but in spite of the force of Professor Ramsey's contention, we have slight doubt that the traditional view is correct. The letter fits in between 2 Corinthians and the Romans, defending Paul's apostleship as in the former, and being a rough draft of the latter. The time thus falls in the latter part of his third missionary tour. It surely could not have been written before Thessalonians as implied by the new theory. Throughout, we hear the ringing words of liberty.

Shortly after Paul's second visit the Church had been "bewitched" by emissaries from Jerusalem who told them that Paul was not an apostle but only a teacher and a heretic; he was not one of the twelve, and his doctrine of freedom from the law is opposed to that of Peter and James and the "pillars" of the Church. Thus they urged them to be circumcised and turn away the wrath of God, no doubt going to the extreme of Jewish teachers who taught that "the very existence of heaven and earth depend on circumcision."

No wonder the spirit of Paul was stirred with hot indignation, and that without his usual thanksgiving and salutations he abruptly began to hurl his arguments against his adversaries who would thus grievously bind the liberties of the Church he so dearly loved, and who, on a previous visit, would have "plucked out their eyes for him."

There are six short chapters. Two are reminiscent, two are argumentative, and two are practical. He plainly tells them that his authority comes not from the "super-apostles," and that his Gospel is from Christ, and "if an angel preach another gospel let him be accursed" (1:8). He proceeds to show them how the law is simply a curse of bondage to those who are free in Christ. "The law was our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (3:24).

The law is inferior to the promise of God made to Abraham. Man cannot keep the whole law, and the curse is on him who does not thus keep it. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth"? Paul knew the law of liberty and that only the truth could make them free. The law has served its purpose. It is external scaffolding for the spiritual temple; restrictive rules for childhood. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (5:1). Thus, all through this letter, Paul's ringing cry of liberty is heard, yet a cry of pathetic sorrow that they free themselves from these "beggarly elements."

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

In a very intimate, tender, and finally conclusive way does Paul use the name of "Christ" as a personal name over forty times in this short letter. This glorious freedom is found alone in Jesus Christ. The preëxistence of Christ is clearly taught. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son" (3:4). If you accept this truth of the apostle you are shut up to a belief in the virgin birth. "Genomenon" is the Greek word for "became" and is a neutral participle. Why "of a woman" instead of a man? Because God is the Father, as has just been declared.

Paul's thoughts centered in the cross. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ" (4:14). He believed that Christ took on Himself the full consequence of human sin. "He became a curse," and was born under the law. Not that He was a victim and a substitution for us and that His sufferings are to be equivalent to ours, but that He identified Himself with us and voluntarily chose the lot of man. In the second and third chapters, arguing from his own experience, he shows how this great central fact wholly changed his relation to God. He died to the law, being baptized into Christ, and instead of being a slave to the law he becomes a son of his Father. He was crucified with Christ and arose with Christ and now has in his innermost life the glory of the cross and the power of the resurrection.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

In the retrospect given in the opening chapter, Paul gives us a hint of his gradually widening conceptions of Christ and His Kingdom. Paul had been a close adherent of the law, and as Jesus died under the curse on the tree, doubt must have assailed the apostle. His struggle to free himself from Judaism was not wholly over, and this must have been his reason for shunning the apostles at Jerusalem. Much of their eager conversation must have been concerning Christ's attachment to the law, and he "conferred not with flesh and blood." Christ did not, in so many words, abrogate the law, but He left teaching that by its constant light melted the frigid requirements of the law and gave the world the flowing streams of liberty. As a son his religious consciousness is awakened. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts crying, Abba, Father." This doctrine of assurance, or witness of the spirit, is here for the first time revealed as the power of the new life in man's consciousness.

In one respect above all others, however, this epistle is an epoch marker. It is an emancipation proclamation, the Magna Charta of religious liberty. The cry had in it the "power of the resurrection" that waked the world from the grave of dead works. With sharp reproof, bitter irony, and withering sarcasm, and shot through with holy enthusiasm, it was echoed and reëchoed through the ages by Luther in Germany, Huss in Prague and Wesley in England. This cry, "the just shall live by faith," will be more fully treated in the next epistle.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

The Galatians were free and happy, but the Judaizers said, "Oh, well, we must be fair; we'll hear your side of the case, and as our great teacher Paul says, we'll be 'all things to all men.'" In those days all questions of religion were in a ferment. The Pharisee had worked so feverishly on his religion that he had burned out to a shell. The Sadducee had harboured the winter of scorn and was a frozen iceberg. The "foolish Galatians" knew not how to turn. They lifted anchor and floated peacefully for a bit, and were driven about by every wind of doctrine. The world is full of critics. It is an easy job. I can criticize the finest piece of architecture or the most beautiful picture in the world, and be utterly ignorant of architecture and painting. In those early days, if man lacked credulity in all the Rabbinical excrescences of the law, or carried wood on the Sabbath, by wearing pegged shoes, or outraged that holy day by taking a sack of corn to a starving family, or failed to tithe some of the smaller leaves of the garden mint, he was anathematized by the Pharisee.

Human nature is pretty much the same to-day. A man's conscience is quickened and he pushes a cause with vim, and a "decency and order" gentleman says, "He is trying to run the whole church." A Bible scholar makes an honest investigation of some tradition and attempts to sift the chaff from the wheat, and he is called a "rationalist" or a "radical," or, worse than all, a "higher critic." Listen to everybody and do as you please if that pleases God. They said all these things about Paul, but none of these things moved him. His jealous love for his dear Galatians moved him to hurl his fire-tipped arrows of a righteous indignation that gave these meddlers a mortal blow.

XLII

ROMANS

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

PAUL wrote this letter to the Christians at Rome from Corinth where he had just completed his collections for the poor at Jerusalem. He sent the epistle by a noble Christian lady named Phœbe, who resided at the port of Corinth. She was about to make a business trip to Rome, and Paul availed himself of this opportunity. Of this, the fullest and most systematic statement of theology to be found in the New Testament, the date, 58 A. D., is well fixed. His collections up, and his impassioned letter to the Galatians written, he writes this epistle with ease and leisure.

We do not know how or when these early Christians came to be in Rome, but, most likely, from visitors to Jerusalem during Pentecost, as we know "strangers of Rome" were present there. The group must have been composed mostly of Gentiles who had been more or less Judaized. He impresses them with the fact that he is "called to be an apostle," that they might the more give heed. He commends their faith, spoken of "throughout the world," implying great boldness on their part, but says he is "not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, and longs to preach it in the capital of the Roman world."

His object is to show how God may be "just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus" (3:26). He proclaims that man is "justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (3:28). Therefore, justification by faith is the key and dominant thought of the letter. His first argument is from the Abrahamic covenant. Faith, he shows, was accounted to him for righteousness before Moses. If they of the law be heirs, faith is made void. Concerning his use of the word Righteousness there is much discussion. For our purpose it is sufficient to say that in the sense of faithfulness the word is applied to God, and, in the sense of justification, to man. To justify is to reckon faith for righteousness as a gift from God. Thus Paul fills the forensic form with spiritual intent. Righteousness is the acquittal, and justification the decree, handed down by God, the Judge. The righteousness of God is thus the ground for conferring righteousness on man.

We should not be led by Paul's legal forms, brought over from his Jewish training, to conclude that he does not stress the spiritual significance. Suffice it to say, his use of "imputed" does not imply the transmission of moral quality but of legal merit. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:1). On the other hand the Gentiles, who held their freedom from the law, were warned that while it is a fact that "where sin abounds, grace does much more abound," they must not conclude that they may sin that grace may abound.

Thus does Paul build a bridge from the law to the Gospel, from Judaism to Christianity, with welcome to all written over the entrance, illuminated by the light of freedom and buttressed by the righteousness of God, mediated through the death of the risen Christ.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

While Paul seems to deplore the fact that he was not called as an apostle during the earthly life of Christ, yet he gives little or no reference to His personal work. In his acute and highly wrought out argument for justification by faith, he deals naturally only with His death and resurrection, and in any historical way, not largely with that. He shows us that while Jesus was born a Jew "as concerning the flesh," He is over all, God blessed for ever (9:5).

In his prologue he calls Him the "Son of God with power." His argument involved the fact that Christ is the "end of the law for righteousness." The Christ

Paul preached is the God "made in the likeness of sinful flesh." Mind you, He was not made sinful flesh, but in "the likeness of it." Here enters a legal phase of the atonement that is in reality "the mystery of the Gospel." Death "reigned," he means to say, as a usurper, and Christ comes with a power that annihilates death caused by sin, and breaks the power of sin over us.

The scope of our purpose forbids our entering the discussion of the atonement. Let us say, however, that such classic phrases as "propitiation of our sins" must not lead us to believe that the viols of God's wrath were about to be poured out upon the world, and that thus Christ propitiated an angry God. We must remember that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," etc. He died, not as a substitute for man. "He died for us," in the sense that He died in our behalf. In a mysterious way He voluntarily, but in obedience to the Father's will, gave Himself that God might be justified in His eternal purpose to redeem man through faith in His (Christ's) name.

It is mainly the "power of his resurrection," to which Paul looks with hope; but this hope springs from the ground of His sacrifice, suffering and death. Thus the legal phases of the atonement, or its effects godward, are a mystery we can never fathom; but the beneficent results of the atonement manward are easy to see. By its regenerative and energizing spirit, it is beautifying, cleansing and uplifting the world of mankind.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

It is easy to see the growth in the consciousness of Paul since he wrote his letter to the Thessalonians when he seemed absorbed in the spectacular coming of the Lord. A few positive and permanent contributions Paul has made to the religious thought of the world. It might be well to mention them here.

1. The conception of the office and person of the Holy Spirit given to the Church.

2. He gave the germ thought of unity in the Church that grew to the idea of a great connectional organism as held by the world to-day.

3. Another contribution that we owe to this great heart and intellect is the remarkable body of theological doctrine concerning Jesus Christ that enabled the Church to survive many a stormy crisis in its history. He taught that Jesus is very God and very man, treating the mysterious problems of the divinity and humanity of Christ and unifying them in doctrines so forceful and clear as that humanitarian and mystic have been conciliated.

4. In that early time he won the freedom of the individual Christian from obedience of the Jewish law, at the same time saving his conscientious scruples. His greatest triumph was the silencing of the contenders for a smug provincialism, and the giving of an open door of welcome to every race.

5. He empowered the conception of the gospel truth by clearing it of a weak antinomianism, and gave the world the ideas of righteousness and purity that are destined to fill it with noble ideals.

6. Above all, he gave a clear and ringing doctrine of justification by faith, which practically includes all the others, thus giving tongue to this guiding principle by which we may carry out this great program for the salvation of the race. Hence we conclude that when God needs a real man to stand the test in any great epoch of the Church's life, he seeks one rich in inheritance, fostered in a home life conducive to piety, equipped educationally, and consecrated to the highest aims of service to God and humanity. Note how Moses, Paul, Luther and Wesley, educationally as well as religiously trained, led the way out of four of the darkest periods of Christian history, and made their imperishable and permanent contributions to the human race.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

One lesson that we should learn in our attempt to interpret the writings of Paul is, that as he argues in broad lines and quotes largely from the Old Testament, we should be careful to distinguish his illustrations from the point at issue. He brings into the argument many things he does not discuss or explain. Instance the fatherhood of God, the saving grace of Christ, the fall of man, baptism and predestination. The excrescences and non-essentials are the questions, like the last three named, seized upon by ecclesiastics who have, by their long, drawn-out debate, veered far too often from the "Pauline Gospel" into the wastes of transcendental nonsense. Suffice it to say, total depravity has no application to the little babe in your home and baptism that does not cleanse the heart is of little value. If predestination is "particular," Paul rings the changes on his much-loved "all" in this epistle in vain, and the whole New Testament is at war with the truth. The blessed phrase, "whom he did foreknow" (8:29), includes us all. My point is, that unless you take the whole sweep of his argument you may be caught up in a little eddy and left by the way.

Paul's theses are acutely argued, his sentences are often very long and embarrassingly involved. He uses the same word to express different meanings; uses judicial phraseology to express spiritual truth; turns aside from the point at issue to stride through a long and difficult parenthesis and returns to attack with no apology to the reader. No wonder Simon Peter who (like most of us), getting lost in these wonderful mazes, said: "Brother Paul according to the wisdom given unto him also in his epistles in which are some things hard to be understood which they that are unlearned wrest to their own destruction."

XLIII

PHILIPPIANS

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

PHILIPPI has the distinction of being the first Church founded on European soil. In answer to the call, "Come over into Macedonia and help us," Paul set sail from Troas to Neapolis, and thence to Philippi, and sought out the Jews who directed him to "a place of prayer" by the riverside. Lydia, a dyer of purple, and other women gathered about him there. The former was converted, and her household. Little wonder that in this letter he should exhort the Church there to "help those women which laboured with me in the Gospel."

This epistle belongs to the personal and Christological group; namely, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians, all of which were written about 63 A. D., and during his first imprisonment at Rome. As to whether it was the first or last of these epistles, scholars are about equally divided. That Ramsey, Zahn and others accept the view that it was the last is rather convincing.

After Tychicus and Onesimus had departed with letters, as heretofore indicated, Epaphroditus, a leading elder in the Church at Philippi, arrived with an offering for the apostle. This was not the first or only donation sent Paul from that Church. Founded on the faith and labours of good women, such thoughtful consideration for the apostle's needs is not strange.

To a stirring, passionate, purposeful soul like Paul's, imprisonment usually gives a gloomy outlook, resulting in an unspeakable sorrow. Not so with Paul. His surface reflections might be ruffled, yet deep in his soul there abode a calm and a joy undisturbed. So by this elder he sends request to the Philippian Church that they sorrow not for him. "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice." His joy is not like "thorns crackling under a pot," but a joy welling from the inexhaustible resources and resulting from a vital communion with God, and a deep gratitude and tender affection for these children of his love. His is not a heedless joy that laughs all sorrow away. Like a happy mother with her babe, he bears burdens of solicitous love. "If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." So, like the mother when danger approaches the child, he cries out, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil-workers." He assures them: "The things which happened to me have fallen out unto the furtherance of the Gospel; so that my bonds are manifest in all the palace." Thus "joy" and "rejoice" ring out all through the letter, and in this the key is easily found.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

For eight or ten years since his first visit to them a beautiful unity had existed among them. If there has come now a slight disturbance, it has come through selfish exaltation. "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

Just here Paul launches into the profoundest Christology. His spiritualized and historical imagination reaches back into the preëxisting realms of Christ in God. From these luminous heights of glory he sees Christ Jesus, "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery (a thing to be seized) to be equal with God." Then showing His condescension and humiliation, Paul says: "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Into deeper depths yet, Paul follows Him in the act of self-emptying (Kenosis) of heavenly glory. Through Gethsemane to Calvary "He was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."

Now, in glowing colours, Paul describes the ascent. Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is " above every name." Ah, now we can see the face of the old soldier of Christ light up, and feel his heart-throb as he visualizes the obeisance of all creation. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, of things in heaven and earth, and things under the earth, that " Jesus Christ is Lord " (2:6–8).

Let all theologians take note that Paul is not making an argument, but simply drawing an illustration. But from these words we clearly see that he accepts Jesus as essentially divine, and not exercising divine functions simply. He surrenders His divine privileges, and not His essence of the God nature, and wins the free gift of this high honour, not by claiming it of right, but by voluntarily suffering humiliation and sacrifice. Thus the Lordship of Christ comes not by the shining road of ambition, but by the lowly road of humility. All of which Paul writes to illustrate the meaning of verse 2:5, " Let this mind be in you, that was also in Christ Jesus."

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

The greatest epoch of progress marked in this epistle is the Christology revealed. This we have just discussed. This is incidentally given, but note the approach he makes to that remarkable utterance: " And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment (good sense)."

If Philippians is the last letter of the group, Paul had found much time for meditation on the riches of Christ and the manifold relation of His Kingdom. He himself is making every effort to make progress in the knowledge of God, and is urging it on the Church. " Approve (try) things that are excellent (that differ) that ye may be sincere and without offense." He means to say: You will meet things that may seem strange to you. Dare to test them out with the best intellectual and spiritual equipment you can muster, that you may not blunder and give "offense" in things pertaining to the Kingdom.

Preaching as usual from his own experience, he assures them that he sees ahead the goal of perfection and has not yet "attained." Then with determined eagerness he adds: "This one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Acute and intellectual argument seems left behind as heart foremost he delves into the experimental riches of spiritual truth. He urges them to use him "as an ensample," and keeping a forward look, an open heart and a level head, test out "whatsoever things are true," honest, just, lovely and of good report, and to "think on these things."

In no epistle does the apostle find himself so closely and vitally united with the life and the omnipotent forces of Christ. In great joy he sees the illuminated bridge across the gulf of death, and claims the citizenship of the heavenly state. The very life of the risen Lord seems flowing into his veins, and he cries out, "For me to live is Christ." Empowered by such vital union, he declares: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

While Paul was gifted with keen intellectual powers, he had an emotional, intense, passionate nature. Add to this those heaven-born convictions that gripped him and controlled him during his whole missionary life and labours, and you can easily understand how enemies with malignant hate would hound his tracks; but also, how friends with unmatched loyalty and love would sacrifice for his comfort. His bodily appearance may have been "contemptible," but back of this and within, and shining forth, there was that magical mystery we call personality; that magnetic force that seemed to bind men to him with hoops of steel.

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Barnabas at the risk of life befriended him at Jerusalem; Mark and Luke wrote and journeyed for him through all his missionary activities. Other young and gifted men, like Titus and Timothy, gladly took orders from the master and discharged them in unhesitating loyalty. Aquila and Priscilla would "lay down their necks" for him. Onesiphorus visited Rome and "sought him out," indicating that he hazarded his life to aid him. Churches raised lamentations when something prevented his visit to them. There were many, like people of Galatia, who would "pluck out their eyes" for him. Epaphroditus, representing the love and sympathy of the Philippian Church, traveled to Rome, seven hundred miles, a month's journey, carrying their gifts and expressions of affection. Men, too, of the lowest station were drawn to him—the runaway slave and the servitors in Cæsar's household. No doubt the guarding sentinels and the soldiers chained to his arm were wooed and won by this humble, unselfish soul with his earnest pleas, and the silent power of his mystic life.

Let us emulate the unselfishness of Paul's life pitched on the loftiest plane, and devoted to the execution of a program worthy of our God-given powers. In a sphere like this alone can be created those tender yet powerful bonds of love that neither time nor death can sever.

XLIV

COLOSSIANS

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

COLOSSÆ, Laodicea and Hierapolis were cities in Phrygia, situated a few miles apart, on the Lycus river. Closely connected with this epistle, and near Ephesus, the long-time residence of Paul, they were never visited by the apostle. Hierapolis is immortalized as the birthplace of Epictetus, the greatest moral teacher of the heathen world; Laodicea as the rich and unfaithful Church of John's Apocalypse; and Colossæ, the otherwise least important of the three, by this letter of St. Paul. It was written about 63 A. D. and during his first imprisonment at Rome.

Colossians belongs to the Christological group, and was written at the same time with Philemon and Ephesians and sent by the same three messengers, Epaphras, Onesimus and Tychicus, as circular letters to be read interchangeably in the three churches. In no other of his epistles is Christ so exalted, and the key thought is, "Christ is all and in all."

Epaphras, the faithful pastor of this region, was sent to Rome, a trip of seven hundred miles, to inquire into Paul's condition. The latter was distressed by the news of strange doctrines taught there by certain Alexandrian emissaries. These heresies were the insidious and galvanized mixture of dying faiths afterward known as Gnosticism, combated by St. John in his Gospel. Hence, these two writings are so similar they should be read together.

A close study shows there was a blending of Judaistic teaching of meats and drinks and moons, Sabbath, etc., with a theosophic speculation that sought the mediating powers "of angels between God and man" (2: 16–18).

A dualism was taught that tended so to separate the human elements from the person of Christ as to nullify His sufferings and sacrifice for us. Involved, too, in this vain philosophy, there was an austere asceticism and a crucifixion of the flesh that tended to make the deceit more successful (2:23). All of which provokes Paul to proclaim Christ as the Lord of matter as He is of spirit. He sets forth His creative and mediatorial functions. "Christ is all and in all" (3:11). He created all things, is the redeemer of man, and dwelling within man is the only "hope of glory" (1:27). This is a universal Gospel, worthy to be "preached to every creature under heaven" (1:23).

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

This epistle was called forth by the news that a doctrine of angel worship that dethroned Christ was being taught these Phrygians; a rabbinical theosophy that depreciated Him and, joined with a morbid asceticism, reversed the whole program of His gracious provisions for all men. The question is, Shall they follow these "traditions of men" and the childish flummery of their contradictory and bewildering philosophy, or shall they trust Him who has within Him "the fulness of Godhead" and in regal glory stands at the "head of all the principalities and powers"? (2:10).

In that remarkable passage (1:13–18) Paul proclaims Christ as "the first-born among the dead," the creator of all things, the forgiver of sins, "the Son of his love," "the great Head of the Church," "the image of the invisible God," and "the first-born of all creation." In a word, "Christ is all and in all." What further words could Paul use to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ, for whose sake he is a prisoner at Rome? Any who reject the deity of Jesus and accept these inspired statements of the apostle must have considerable difficulty in reconciling these two doctrines so utterly hostile the one to the other.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

In the apostle's letter to the Thessalonians no trumpet call sounded to battle, but fond anticipations filled his heart. In Corinthians a diversity of questions challenged which must have tried his ingenuity to answer. In Romans and Galatians, the Judaizing doctrines threatened to subvert his converts and steal that liberty that has now become the heritage of the Christian world.

The eschatological period and the Judaic period are now past and Paul confronts, in most respects, his most dangerous enemy. It does not attack with such violence as did Judaism, but insidious and silent, without voice or noise, it glides into the midst of the little Colossian Church like the serpent entering Eden. Noiseless, charming, deceitful, it steals the livery of heaven and serves the devil. It talked soothingly and plausibly to these unsuspecting converts about the glory and beauty of the celestial world and the bright mediating angels that should elicit our adoration and worship. Angel worship persisted in Colossæ even down to the tenth century when Michael, the leader of the angel hosts, was worshipped as the saint and protector of that city.

In enticing words of men's wisdom they meant to tell them that Christian doctrine is all right but they needed to press on to perfection through a series of ceremonial observances. "Touch not, taste not, handle not." How plausible this appeal of these teachers of the new cult! Thus, under the garb of philosophy so called, they were enticing them away from their new-found freedom in Christ back to the trammels of rigid and lifeless asceticism. Paul concludes the greatest need of these unlearned and simple folk is knowledge and spiritual understanding (1:9).

As the great apostle looked out on the big needy world, black in sin, and saw these little campfires builded at such a cost in his arduous missionary labours; and fully aware that from these little camps must be lighted the torches of religious freedom and human redemption for the world, is it any wonder that when he saw wicked devices for dimming their radiance that he should spring to the rescue? When he saw in this great crisis that the Church of Christ as a living organism was about to be crystallized into an enticingly attractive but lifeless form, he wrote this letter and two others to save this group of cities from such a fate.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

"Philosophy" mentioned here is found nowhere else in the New Testament (2:9). Philosophy is a search for the ultimate in truth, and in the very nature of the case cannot succeed. "Who by searching can find out God?" Paul's plea is that Christianity should not become a dead, static, mechanical set of man-made rules and thus enmesh and entrammel man by external ordinances, but should be a dynamic force that finds expression in good living; an experience of Christ in the heart. He did not believe in painting the pump when there was poison in the water.

The beauty of the Alexandrian philosophy did not dazzle Paul. He knew the difference between a Christmas tree, where apples and oranges are tied on, and a living tree on which hangs beautiful and luscious fruit. He tells these Phrygians that if they expect to be lifted to higher heights they must look to a power that stands on a higher plane than this sinful world. He shows them that they cannot "lift themselves over the fence by their own bootstraps."

Men make rules to tack on the walls, Christ gave principles whose birthplace is the heart, and whose issues are the daily life. Beware of the philosophic leaven. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of this world and not after Christ" (2:8). O foolish Colossians, why attempt to build a tower of Babel to reach heaven? Seek your own holiness and you will end in despair. Seek God's holiness in Jesus Christ, cease to exalt yourselves or even your love for truth. Exalt the love of Christ for you, and "the truth shall make you free."

A tramp was seized and washed, and dressed in decent apparel. I saw the tramp again and he was as filthy as before. A soul was wooed and won by a new hope. I saw the soul again and it had gained a throne of love, and bejeweled with light, worked miracles of grace to the wonder and blessing of a whole city.

XLV

PHILEMON

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

PHILEMON was a convert of Paul at Colossæ, as were his wife and son. The latter seems to have been pastor at the above named church, using his father's house for the meeting-place. This Christian household had in it a slave named Onesimus, who had stolen some goods from his master, Philemon, and fled to Rome. How this slave came under the influence of Paul, nobody knows; but, likely, one of Paul's friends met him on the street and gave him the information that Paul was in the city; and, it may be, led him to the apostle. Tychicus was a native of Colossæ, and what is more likely than that he who knew well the household from which Onesimus had fled, should play this part?

It is all very beautiful and occasions an example of fine Christian courtesy on the part of Paul. It shows him in the rôle of a Christian gentleman. Onesimus means "profitable," and Paul shows a rather keen wit in his play on the word. "In time past he was the unprofitable." Christian courtesy is the key to this little personal note. Politeness is a term of the world. It means a proper external behaviour toward one's fellows. From its derivation, we find courtesy springs from the heart and is an element of Christian love. "Love doth not behave itself unseemly."

Onesimus so whole-heartedly confesses his sin and so sincerely surrenders to Christ that the apostle is greatly moved and writes this letter to the master frankly explaining the whole affair. He would have gladly kept him, but he would not thus take advantage of his intimate friendship with Philemon. He does gracefully intimate that he would love much to keep him in Rome, and generously offers to refund for the goods stolen. As Lightfoot suggests, the request for the slave's freedom "trembles on his lips." At any rate, Paul would commend him and urge his "reception as a brother."

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

The Kingdom of Heaven is a leaven, and in this little note of courtesy, the leaven of freedom has for the first time, in a direct way, been dropped into the meal of society. It is with rare tact and delicacy that Paul makes his request. Mercy is asked, but justice speaks through it all. He asks it on the ground of personal favour, but note you, the emphasis is laid on the basis that true Christian brotherhood should exist between master and slave. Philemon had in the past many opportunities to hear from Paul about that Christ who "has no respect of persons"; of Christ who healed the beggar of his blindness, cleansed the leper, and sat on the well with the outcast woman. He heard the voice of Jesus in Paul's message. The sequel is unknown, but we can guess he did not refuse the request.

How silent are the mighty forces of Christ's Kingdom! Who, in the capital of the mighty Roman Empire, could have prophesied that this innocent little message to a friend was the entering wedge that set free millions of slaves? Who could then have looked down the years and seen Jesus with the golden keys of love walking through the corridors and jails of earth to set the prisoners free, and through the slaveholder's house to unshackle "all that are bound."

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon were written at the same time, hence from Paul's imprisonment at Rome, perhaps about 62 or 63 A. D. This is the only strictly personal letter written to a private individual to be found in the New Testament. In his chains though he is, Paul is not writing for a petition from his friends, or fresh witnesses to his innocency, but for the reception of a thieving runaway slave. Rome was a safe place for the renegade slave in which to hide. He was only one among tens of thousands at that time in Rome, and among all few likely were more despised, especially as he was a stigmatized Phrygian.

If "Rome was rotten at the top," what is to be said of the bottom? Of the unplumbed depths of degradation of the seething underworld of that city just at this time, we have some hints. If Onesimus had left us a full record of his experiences in Rome he would have added to the world's knowledge of that wicked city in the time of Nero. More than four hundred slaves had just been led to slaughter under the order of Nero, because their master Pedarius had been slain in his bed by an unknown murderer. This was done simply to quell the restless slaves, whose muttering undertones of threat brought fear to the noble freemen. The old and obsolete law was that if the master were murdered, all his slaves must suffer the penalty. Of course the object and result were to make the slaves more jealous for the protection of the master.

The wonderful principles set loose in the world, that have through the years wrought for the amelioration and freedom of mankind, certainly then did not rise from paganism. Nor did they rise from Judaism. The Rabbis said, "It is forbidden to teach a slave the law." Eliezer said: "Have I not told you that these signs of respect are not to be shown at the death of a slave; that nothing may be said but what is said when oxen and asses die?"

The Kingdom of God "cometh without observation," and is not of this world. It could not raise insurrections and storm citadels with earthly force, but stories of brotherhood and ideas of freedom were silently dropped into the master's heart and, lo, the slave came out scot free. Thus "this little letter became the Magna Charta of freedom throughout the world."

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

Moses made a mistake when he slew the Egyptian and tried to raise an insurrection among his brethren. Only "in the fulness of time" can a great reformation be successfully launched. Christianity never marshaled its forces for an attack from the outside. Silent as the dew and noiseless as a ray of light, before men's eyes, and with their grateful consent, the foundations of the slave system disintegrated and crumbled. A little leaven of brotherhood fed by the spirit of Christ leavened the whole lump of society, and the walls of provincial hate and social caste tumbled to the ground.

"Know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Onesimus found Christ and was no longer a slave. A drunkard bound by the chains of habit found Christ and the chains fell away. Little children worked long hours in a factory; Jesus came into the heart of the employer, and they now play in the sunshine. A Philistine, dark of soul and lustful for gold, coined blood and sweat into doubloons; Christ brought to him a high sense of the dignity of human life and the worth of a single soul, and master and men do twice the work and twice as well under the inspirational music of love and brotherhood. Thus we find in this courteous personal note, a true key to fit the lock, a Christ who promises a new earth, a progress in divine revelation, and valuable lessons on life's duties.

XLVI

EPHESIANS

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

THE scope of our work forbids extended discussion as to the authorship of this epistle. The evidence, internal and external, is convincing. Paul wrote it primarily to the Ephesian Church, but it was a circular letter with blanks in the address to be filled in with the names of the churches concerned. It is an imprisonment letter, written from Rome, and belongs with "Philippians, Colossians and Philemon" to the Christological group, written at the time of the two latter, about 63 A. D.

The main theme is unity. It is mainly directed to Gentile Christians and its aim is to conciliate them and the Jewish Christians. He pleads for the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. It is free from the personal and controversial, and is a legacy of peace left to the Church. From all eternity the Church was predestined to unite Jew and Gentile, and this union prophesies the divine life in all its fulness.

With a full panoply, such a Church is entering a warfare that will end by crowning Christ as the center and the unifying force of the universe.

1. The Fatherhood of God implies that all men have the same Father (4:6).
2. The ideal humanity existed in Christ "before the foundation of the world" (1:4).
3. In order to reach a secure and stable condition, the Church must be increased in wisdom and knowledge, and not "cast about, to and fro, by every wind of doctrine" (4:14).

4. Human nature is lifted into the "heavenlies," manifesting God in Christ, and linking it up with the whole creation (3: 18–19).
5. With an historical sweep of vision, Paul sees all things gathered together, both in the heavens and the earth, and all things will "work after the counsel of his own will" (1: 10–11).
6. The unity of God has assured the ideal unity of the Church, but can only be kept in unity of the spirit and perfected by the work of the ministry (4: 3–12).
7. Family life is dignified and elevated to the place of a type of the Church (5: 25); and in this relation many practical matters are given notice.

Amidst all the distracting things of earth Paul can see one hope and only one; namely, placing Christ at the center. He sees that day when Descartes will see that God is in His world, and Hegel that intellectual search will be in vain, and James that the "workability" of pragmatism cannot be known without a standard. Bergson may recognize the short range of intellectual vision and call it intuition; but these winged paradise birds of human genius need not fly without a purpose if their goal be the summer sea of ultimate truth. The only royal road to light is "to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge" (3: 19).

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

In no other sacred writings are the unity of the Church and its universality more effectively presented. With eloquence unexcelled, Paul exalts the Church by identifying it with the body of Christ, thus placing it over all principalities and powers of earth or heaven.

The spiritual unity, and thus the salvation, of humanity depends on a vital union with Christ. "In Christ," mentioned thirty times in this letter, shows the great emphasis he would place on this fact. Compare with the fourth Gospel, particularly chapter seventeen where the thought is strikingly in parallel. The preëxistence of Christ, His glorification in His disciples, God's love for Christ before the foundation of the world, and this love compared with His love for Christians, and so on goes the parallel through nearly every verse.

Is it unreasonable to believe that the apostle heard this great high priestly prayer of our Lord from John? This is emphatically the epistle of the ascended Christ (3:8). This Logos, preëxisting Christ, this Christ by whom all things subsist, and for whom families in heaven and earth are named, is the "chief corner-stone of the household of God," in which Jew and Gentile fellowship with the saints (2:19–22). He exalts the Church by identifying it with the body of Christ, thus insuring its vitality; and naming it as the bride of Christ, thus insuring it His abiding love. At the meeting-place stands Christ for all the bewildering providences of earth.

Christ has been claimed by all classes, movements and clubs. They all profess to seek the salvation of the world; the Church, its moral and spiritual salvation; the socialist, its economic salvation. Christ organized no movement for social betterment, but sent the multitude away and spoke to one Pharisee of one lone woman. He came not as one of the prophets to identify Himself with the struggles and schemes of a single age. He thus belongs to all movements for human betterment, and to all ages, all races and all conditions of men. Oh, "the unsearchable riches of Christ!" Let us join "the fellowship of that mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God who created all things in Jesus Christ" (3:8–9).

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

This epistle was written at the same time as Colossians, and is very similar to it. The freer spontaneity of style and thought is accounted for by the fact that he lived in Ephesus for over two years. Each has six chapters, and Ephesians has only six verses more than Colossians. Seventy-six verses out of one hundred and fifty-five, in Ephesians, contain the same phrases, yet the epistles differ in many substantial words and ideas. While the salutations, literary arrangement, the stress placed on increase of knowledge, and the relation of Christ the risen Lord to the universe and the Church are pretty much the same, there are some strongly marked differences; namely, the personal reference and the controversial tone are lacking here, and His relation to the Church instead of His relation to the universe is stressed in this epistle. The "plaroma" (complement, filling out) was used in Colossians with reference to Christ and God, but in Ephesians the Church is the "plaroma" of Christ. In Colossians the work of the Holy Spirit is mentioned once, here twelve times.

Comparing the Judaic and Christological group, it is interesting to note that in each there is an emotional and a calm epistle. Galatians and Romans are very similar because each was written to correct practically the same evils. The first is impassioned, the second very sober and calm. We have the same thing touching the Colossians and Ephesians; Colossians corresponding to Galatians, and Ephesians to Romans.

We note the ever clearing view of the Church in the consciousness of the apostle. He speaks now as "Paul the aged" in a certain dogmatic manner that would hardly have been proper in his early life. He delves into the treasure of eternity with a sure hand and talks of predestination in a way bewildering to many who have gone Paul one better and treated the doctrine as if the applications were to individuals. Paul means to say that as the Jewish nation was chosen and predestinated, so you, as the Church of Christ from the foundation of the world, are chosen for adoption into His family. Worse yet, without any authority from Paul, some have so wrested this glorious Scripture as to reprobate particular ones to eternal damnation. Coleridge, who tried to believe in particular predestination, but saw written all over the pages of the New Testament "whosoever" and "all" and "all men," and mostly by Paul himself, says: "In the sphere and wisdom of the omniscient God reconciliation is found." God predestinates the whole in the moral freedom of the integral parts.

The advancing clearness of Paul's thought is clearly marked here. Let us note, too, the growth in Christian hymnody (5:19). Paul has a broadened and, indeed, we might say, a lifted horizon. No longer does he combat Judaism, but rather commends them to the love of the Gentiles as a complement to their Christian lives and the fulfillment of their destiny. No longer does he look for the immediate coming of the Lord, but, through the vista of coming years, he sees generation after generation, each making its own contribution to the enrichment of the Church whose continuity is throughout all ages, and whose chief purpose is the glorification of the risen Christ (3:21).

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

St. Paul, born and bred a "Pharisee of the Pharisees," and steeped in all the symbolism of Jewish Scripture, walked through the dim but divine radiance of the Shekinah light out into the great sunburst of the knowledge and glory of the risen Christ (chapter 5).

A native genius and a providential preparation joined with the "love of Christ that surpasseth knowledge," inspired him with originality unmatched, to trace a philosophy of history throughout the ages; walking with purpose or sitting at ease in the mystical kingdom of heavenly spheres. More marvelous yet he stoops in humility to trace our steps in the most trivial details of our lowly human life.

Just here we find one of the sharpest contrasts between the Christian religion and oriental cults of the non-Christian world. An important law of psychology tells us of the disastrous results of "impressions without expressions." Such disaster has come to the non-Christian world, resulting in a dreamy, unearthly reverie; transmigration, reabsorption, absurdities, incompleteness, selfishness, ease and sensuality. "To him that hath not shall be taken away even that he hath."

Between the ideal and the reality there is a chasm; but in the Christian religion it is growing narrower while in the non-Christian religion it is growing broader. There is sin in both, but in the Christian religion sin is at war with the religion while in the non-Christian world sin is in accord with the religion. The Christian's goal is yet far ahead where sin cannot enter. Sooner or later, under the present conditions, collapse must come to all pagan religions.

XLVII

FIRST TIMOTHY—TITUS—SECOND TIMOTHY

THE KEY TO THE BOOKS

THESE three short letters of St. Paul are called the "pastoral epistles," and are the last writings we have from this mighty pen. "And Paul dwelt two years in his own hired house." Why did the curtain fall in the middle of the last act of the Book called "The Acts"? We do not know. Evidently he was released, and he moved out eagerly into his loved mission field.

At some place where he had a slight leisure he wrote the first letter to Timothy and the one to Titus. He was rearrested at Troas and taken to Rome for the second imprisonment and death. It was with the executioner's ax in plain view that he wrote from Rome the second letter to Timothy, a year or two later.

By treating these three letters together, we hope not only to save space but also confusion. Timotheus (or Timothy) was converted under Paul at Lystra. He consecrated all to the great missionary program of Paul, assisting in the organization of many churches, among them Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesus, having long residence as overseer or bishop at the latter church. His father was a Greek and his mother a Jewess. The mother Eunice and the grandmother Lois had given him rich inheritance. Paul, for the sake of expediency, had him circumcised. This facilitated his work among the Jewish Christians. He was rather frail in body and timid in disposition.

Leaving Timothy at Ephesus, Paul set out for Macedonia. In the closing events of the apostle's life we have only a disconnected account. It is strange that the Acts make no mention of Titus. He was a Gentile convert, but to allay excitement among the Jews he consented to circumcision. Evidently he was made of sterner stuff than Timothy, as Paul sent him on more difficult missions. Paul once countermanded his order to Timothy to go to Corinth and sent Titus instead. Titus, in this "sunset journey" of St. Paul, was left to reëstablish the churches in the Island of Crete. It is pretty certain that Titus joined Paul at Nicopolis and accompanied him on his last journey to Rome (2 Tim. 4: 10).

In the closing years of "Paul the aged," his main solicitude seems to be the preservation of the precious doctrines for which he had given his life. "Sound doctrine" is the key-note of all three of the letters. There is striking similarity between them, especially First Timothy and Titus. "Sound doctrine" is "contrary" to immorality. They are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ opposed to a senseless "strife of words" by men of corrupt minds (1 Tim. 6: 3–5).

In 2 Timothy 1: 13–14, he urges the young preacher to hold fast that "form of sound words which thou hast heard of me." Forecasting worse times ahead he writes: "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4: 3). Giving Titus his reasons for leaving him in Crete, to "set in order the things that are wanting," exhorting the bishops to hold fast the faithful word and by sound doctrine convince the gainsayers (Titus 1: 9).

To the end that they might be "sound in faith" he orders Titus to rebuke sharply these lying Cretans (Titus 1: 13). In the second chapter of Titus he tells them to speak the words of sound doctrine, giving, as is his custom, at the close of the epistle, the practical applications.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOKS

Let us keep in mind the fact that these letters are personal letters to his two dearly loved young friends.

In such intimate writings it was of course unnecessary to indulge in any extended argument on controversial doctrines. Simply a word or phrase opened large tracts of significant meaning for Timothy and Titus. Thus the full weight of the gospel message went home in the word: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). They knew the meaning of "a faithful saying," perhaps a Logia current among the churches. Such new phrases as God "our Saviour" have been used by some critics in attempt to disprove the authenticity of these letters, but when we consider that they are separated from the earlier epistles by years of time, why should we wonder that, incident to the rapidly changing conditions, new words and condensed phrases should be used?

Christ is identified with God; He came to save "all men." He is "the mediator between God and man." He is a "ransom for all," and Paul, lifting his eyes to the future, sees this as a testimony that "in due time" will work the will of God in the world (1 Tim. 2:3–6). Compare Galatians 4:4.

In Titus, "the kindness and love of God our Saviour" is used as a ground of holiness to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," and is applicable to the humblest ranks of society. There is no need of extended explanations in such great and condensed words as: "And, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory."

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOKS

A great struggle, as shown in the earlier epistles between Jewish Christians and Paulinism, has here given way for a more persistently dangerous one between the Church with its (logia) "sound doctrine," and the heretical philosophies of asceticism, dualism and immoralities (1 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:15). These were creed-making days, the dawn of dogma, and a search for a "form of sound words." Properly used, dogma has been a powerful aid in the protection of "sound doctrine." Great leaders of the Christian world have blazed the way and elevated its thought-life to divine heights, and dogma, like a ratchet in machinery, has marked this height, and steadily held its burden of truth.

A living faith is argued in the earlier epistles, as the door into the Kingdom of Christ, and essential for the salvation of individual souls that are to form the nucleus for the Church. Now it is "the faith" that tests and guards the membership of the Church. These letters are directed, not to the Church but to his dear younger brethren in the ministry. Hence there is no need for an exposition of faith in the former sense, nor extended statement of principles underlying the success and growth of the Church spiritual or catholic; but to these two younger pastors this old and experienced apostle is offering advice and laying down rules and regulations for administering affairs and guarding "the faith" of the visible and local churches for which each is respectively responsible.

Paul shows a manly impatience with intellectual quibbles and superstitious genealogies and old wives' fables; and he makes it clear that if a spiritual religion is to be safeguarded, organization, ritual and sound doctrine must be maintained. Timothy and Titus are under authority of Paul, and to them the old apostle delegates power with instructions for the organization and government of these churches, and the handing down of the precious traditions of the apostles.

Up to this time the women had been allowed to take part in the public services but, perhaps for reasons that were local, the women were forbidden "to teach." The whole body of New Testament teaching, and the years of experience intervening since that day, clear away all doubt touching the value of the women's work, public and otherwise, in the churches. Respecting church organization we have the "episcopos" (bishop), a prominent position of teaching and presidency. The "presbuteros," or elder, is the same order of the ministry as episcopos, and is ordained also to teach and preside. The "diakonos," or deacons are subordinate officers of the church whose duties are not defined. Besides, there are set down at some length, regulations for widows, especially those that are objects of charity.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOKS

In Paul's last message to the Church, he clearly proclaims the doctrine of the inspiration of "all Scripture." From this statement many have been led into ridiculous absurdities, and the acceptance of verbal inspiration. By such a literalistic and mechanical interpretation, freedom of religious thought and practice for which Paul fought on Judaistic grounds is lost.

"The Word of God is not bound" (2 Tim. 2:9). He means to say: While they have thrown me into prison and bound me hand and foot, the Word of God is a dynamic force that may not be suppressed or hindered from expression according to the various needs and conditions of men. It is not a fetishism to be worshipped. It is like Jesus, both human and divine. The Word of God is a dynamic energy illuminated by the Holy Ghost, and not a mechanical, dead, hard and fast piece of penmanship. "Holy men," not words or angels, were inspired. "Men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Let us find a more healthful approach to the Bible and a more natural use of it. Prof. Moulton tells us of an old drama entitled "A Woman Killed with Kindness," and calls our English Bible, "a literature smothered with reverence." For some it is guarded with flaming swords, forbidding the intellect to enter. A religion or a book that does not appeal to the intellect in this enlightened age is doomed.

An infallible authority of the letter would mean the cessation of the struggle for truth. The knowledge of the truth can come only by conflict with error. Dr. Courtland Myers tells us that Catherine II looked from her window and saw a little flower shooting above the snow, and she appointed a sentry to guard it. For eighty years after the flower had gone the sentry paced back and forth. So at the gate of God's written revelation stands the sentry over some withered flower of the past. If the early fathers had possessed this same spirit, we should have had a Bible covered and clouded with traditions, and all those apocryphal books in the canon.

There is also a lesson of how authoritative leadership is won. He built on "no man's foundation"; but blazed the way and, with great suffering and sacrifice, laid them with his own hands. Along this literary road toward holiness, we have walked with Paul the apostle and are now saddened by the dark shadows of martyrdom that fall across the pathway. From the "street called straight" in Damascus, where the scales fell from his eyes, to the Ostian Way near Rome, where his head rolled from the block, and the Tre Fontone bubbles its sparkling waters of life, he was the file leader in the interpretation of Christ's Gospel and in the organization and establishment of the Christian Church. He won the distinction through his sheer power of intellect, his prudence and common sense, as shown in the face of hard situations; his devotion to Christ and loyalty to His Kingdom, his great tender heart of love and affection, and his oft expressed gratitude ever welling from the sincere depths of his great soul, his energy and unceasing toils; and, above all, because he never sought it for himself, there came to him under Christ the head captaincy of the greatest army ever mustered for the conquest of the world.

XLVIII

JAMES

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

THE epistles of St. James, St. Peter, St. Jude and St. John are called Catholic epistles. The Book of James appears to be the earliest writing of the New Testament, the date being about 44 A. D. If it had been written after the council at Jerusalem there would have been some mention of the decision made there. Other reasons for the early date will be given immediately as we proceed.

St. James was the "brother of our Lord"; not one of the twelve, and not even a believer until after the resurrection when our Lord "was seen of James." We cannot go into the long discussion as to the meaning of "brother" in this connection, but it is pretty well proved that he was the son of Mary and Joseph and full brother of Joses, Simon and Jude, the latter being the author of the epistle bearing his name.

Partly because of the sentimental reason, perhaps, that he was the Lord's brother, he became the head of the Church at Jerusalem, a place of great authority in the early Church. Indeed, there is clearly evident a tone of authority through the whole epistle.

The letter is directed to the "Twelve tribes of the Dispersion"; that is to the Jewish Christians outside Jerusalem and scattered throughout the world. Introduced abruptly and with slight salutation, a variety of topics are discussed, but the controversial section deals tersely with faith and works in relation one to the other. We would therefore name "Faith without Works" as the key-word.

After forcefully stating the good and beneficent ends of temptation, and warning the "double-minded" and the haughty rich, he commends the "doers of the word" as opposed to "hearers" only. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (1:27). In this testimony of a righteous life, we find the very heart of the epistle; namely, faith without works is dead. There appears to be conflict at this point between St. Paul and St. James, the former contending that we are saved by faith, and the latter that we are saved by works. It is only in appearance, however. Luther calls this "a downright strawey epistle contradicting Paul and all Scriptures."

Paul tells us how a sinner may be saved, and James tells us how a Christian may be saved. Furthermore, Paul and James did not have in mind the same thing when they used "faith." Paul's "faith" is a belief and trust, with a mystic sense that brought communion with God through Christ. The "faith" of James is a statement of doctrine. To Paul, "works" meant ceremonial obedience to the Mosaic law. To James, "works" meant labours of love and mercy.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

James, being the "brother of our Lord," would naturally be expected to have much to say of Christ and His Gospel. "Gospel" does not occur in the epistle, and the name of Christ is used only twice. The reason is not far to seek. His object is ethical and not theological. If the writing is the first of the New Testament, as we believe, the Jewish Christians were yet standing under the shadow of the synagogue, and the doctrines of Christian grace had not been formulated. While this is true, the epistle is fuller of the earthly teachings of Christ than any other New Testament Book. It is especially prolific in the utterances of Christ in His Sermon on the Mount.

If, as some say, James is "disloyal to the Gospel and the Christ," why does he in the opening verse call himself a slave of Christ? His intimate association with his divine brother made him take many things for granted without any formal statement. While he speaks under Jewish forms at this early period, using such terms as "law of liberty and the royal law instead of the Gospel of Christ," the epistle is full of the spirit of the Lord.

He kept in close touch with the Jewish faith and thus made himself invaluable in certain crises of conflict between the Jewish and Gentile Christians. At the Jerusalem Council, when that question waged hot and Paul plead for freedom of Judaic ceremonialism for Jew and Gentile, it was St. James who, with his powerful influence and authority, arose and spoke the word that brought peace to the early Church, whose fate hung in the balance.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

It was undoubtedly a temporary compromise drawn up by the hand of James at the council just noticed, but a surrender of practically nothing vital. We are sure he saved the Church from a schism in its beginnings that would have grown to very serious proportions. Thus James shows himself a man of judicial mind and good practical sense. His terse, crisp sentences and quotations reveal him as being a close student of the chockmah, or wisdom books of the Jews.

It was said of Jesus, "without a parable spake he not unto them." James and Jude, the Lord's brethren, had much of the same gift of using parables drawn from nature and things familiar, and making application so natural and unstrained that they who run may read. How different from the writings of St. Paul who seemed to take little notice of nature in his figures of speech.

Keep in mind not only that James remained in Jerusalem, the center of Jewish life and tradition, but also that he held in that hotbed of Jewish belief a very conspicuous position. As the Gospels had not yet been written, St. James placed the Church under great obligations also for his record of the Lord's teachings. It is given in a reminiscential manner, as one after hearing some speaker over and over, reports the message in his own way. Note his spiritual conception of the law, of trials, riches, simple professions, saying and doing, prayer, the world, forgiveness, fruits, oaths, etc.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

St. James seemed to have a narrow vision of the world, as he supposedly spent most of his life in Jerusalem; but he spoke in a language easily understood as being applicable to his own time and community, and yet just as applicable to the poor Christian Jews and their rich oppressors all over the world. "The proper study of mankind is man," and human nature has undergone little change in all these years. Like Nehemiah returning from the exile to Jerusalem to find the same conditions, James boils with righteous indignation against the conscienceless and oppressive rich. We find the Jerusalem Church a little later, a subject of charity, and receiving aid from Gentile churches established by St. Paul.

What a noble man speaks in this epistle! deep and unbroken patience in suffering, greatness in poverty, joy in sorrow, simplicity, sincerity, firm, direct confidence in prayer! He wants action, action, not words, not dead faith. No other writer, sacred or profane, was so impatient of the doless gabbers. No other writer more graphically delineates the potential influence of good and evil lodged in the tongue. "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity," he says; "it defileth the whole body and setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell" (3:6). These are frank words from a frank man. How he hates shams and hypocrisies!

The message is very modern. Pretensions, professions! How haughtily they stride into the kingdom of the lowly Redeemer, usurp the highest seats, put on the robes of sanctity, sing the hymns of praise, and utter aloud the prayers which the spirit ought to breathe in silent and childlike confidence into the ears of the listening and loving heavenly Father.

The great triune of graces are "Faith, Hope and Love." Paul is the apostle of Faith, Peter the apostle of Hope and John the apostle of Love. But is faith simple ecstasy? Is hope hollow mockery? Is love sentimental repining? All this is the sickening truth without the apostle of Work, St. James, "the brother of our Lord."

XLIX

FIRST AND SECOND PETER

THE KEY TO THE BOOKS

WHILE the dates of these two epistles must have been separated by at least a year, we are sure it will be less confusing to treat the two Books under one heading. With the possible exception of 1 John, the first of these epistles is the only one of the Catholic group, whose authority has never been questioned in the Church.

The word "Babylon" is likely used mystically for Rome, where he may have been taken under arrest; but more likely, the journey was made at the request of St. Paul. He mentions Mark as his companion, and we know that Mark wrote his Gospel under the supervision of St. Peter. As no mention or intimation of the destruction of Jerusalem is found in either epistle they must have been written before 70 A. D.

Concerning the second epistle there is endless discussion. There is less evidence of its authenticity and genuineness than of any other New Testament Book. It was admitted to the canon by councils in the fourth century, and into the Vulgate, yet with some reluctance, by Jerome. The arguments touching this interesting question are various and voluminous, but our purpose and space forbid any lengthy discussions of this character. See "Hastings' Dictionary" or Westcott on "History of the Canon." It is at least better than any writing outside the canon was when accepted by the council of Laodicea, and is worthy of the great apostle. Anybody who knows the literary customs of that day also knows that the charge of "forgery" is unfounded and wholly gratuitous.

Simon Peter, the chief apostle among the twelve, was the apostle of hope. Not the hope that languishes nor the hope that fossilizes into stoicism or resignation, but "a lively hope," energized by the power of the risen Lord. It is a hope "begotten" of the Lord Jesus Christ, and has a motivating power that cannot be gainsaid or discouraged. Deep in the consciousness of man, fed and illumined by the living Lord, he entreats them to "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (3:15). "Fiery trials" may sweep over you; they will leave you unharmed and happy; "for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (4:14). His resurrection and ascension was to the end "that your faith and hope might be in God."

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOKS

While this is not a doctrinal treatise, Christ is the central theme. All courage must radiate from Him, all hope must there find its source. Neither patience nor holiness can be perfected without finding its motive in His Gospel. He teaches redemption "with the precious blood of Christ," but lays peculiar emphasis on the power of influence from the example of Christ that begets the gratitude in the heart of man. "For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

Christ's salvation was foretold by the prophets. It stirred the interest of the Angels and brought a mighty regenerative force into the lives of men. Peter gives utterance to Christ's ministry among the dead, about which there has been much wonder and mystery. The statement seems clear that, laying aside the flesh, He preached in human spirit to sinners of antediluvian times.

Unconsciously he draws much from his experiences as a companion of Christ and as one of the twelve, as indicated by words used in the first epistle; namely, "Petros" and "rock of offence," "stone," "The tree," "adversary," etc. Also, note the incidents given in the second epistle; namely, "We were with him in the holy mount," "eye-witnesses of his majesty," "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," and such words as "tabernacle," "decease." All these reflect that ever memorable occasion when Christ was transfigured before them in the holy mount. Neither did he forget the day Christ called him from his backslidden state and his old occupation with the words "feed my sheep," and he says, "Ye were my sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25). He urges the elders "to feed the flock of God which is among you, and promises them reward from the "Chief Shepherd."

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOKS

St. James was the head of the Jewish Church at Jerusalem, and the reactionary Jews of the Christian Church confidently quoted his authority. St. Paul was the chief apostle to the Gentiles. St. Peter was hesitant in taking stand with either school. Really he was an apostle of the circumcision, but his great-hearted emotional nature seemed often to bend but never to break to either side.

In the house of Cornelius he had an experience that emboldened him to fraternize and dine with the Gentiles, and to dare face the Council in Jerusalem and confess the fact. He seemed to carry the same courage to Antioch, but when "certain came from James," St. Paul says, "even Peter seemed carried away." He is a true picture of a great and sincere soul seeking the truth. Long before this letter he saw the truth of both schools, and, clothed in Old Testament forms, he preaches righteousness that finds its source in love and ethics that alone claims its springs of power in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

By many scholars it is set forth with much reason that Paul called Peter to Rome for the purpose of sending out a letter under the name of the apostle of the circumcision, a letter carried by Silvanus (or Silas), an intimate friend of Paul, and for the prime end of entirely completing a reconciliation between these two schools.

From similar language and thought we conclude St. Peter and St. Jude must have drawn from a common source. His style is easy-flowing and natural and shows a certain charm and delicacy in the choice and arrangement of words, thanks to his intimate knowledge of the Septuagint. Many of his thoughts and expressions are strikingly similar to those found in Proverbs and certain books of the Apocrypha. He betrays acquaintance too with Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Galatians. While he does not match St. Paul in the heights of eloquence, nor St. James in terse and pithy statements, nor St. John in cryptic and philosophic thought, he surpasses either in spontaneous, unstudied expression. We do not claim for him the intellectual equipment of Paul, but his steady progress in mental grasp and spiritual conception, and especially stability of character, are very clearly marked.

The new Christian order becomes a corporate body deriving its peculiar prerogatives from the Israelitish Church. This new brotherhood is now the "holy nation" and the peculiar people, and Peter exhorts them to "love the brotherhood." In this onward march toward full day, Peter reveals a truly spiritual and historical conception. "Hope to the end," he says, "for grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOKS

I asked an assembly of men, "What is it you like in the character of Simon Peter?" One man responded, "Because he is so human." When I read that "Enoch walked with God and was not, for God took him," I do not seem to draw much comfort from it. Enoch does not touch my poor, weak, erring, sinful life at any point.

When I, in my imagination, see Simon Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration, in ecstasy proposing to build three tabernacles, or in his impetuous presumption sinking in the sea, or in the judgment hall, standing nonchalantly by the coals and rubbing his hands together nervously, attempting to be so unconcerned, and—heaven save the mark—especially when I hear him, a leader among the twelve, and the chief apostle, cursing and swearing and denying his Lord, I say to myself, now here is a life that was lived under the radiant purity and power of the divine Saviour, yet weak and sinful even as mine.

I then turn my eyes on the sorrowful face of Jesus, crowned with thorns that press upon His brow till the blood streaks His temples and cheeks. "Jesus looked upon him." Oh, can I ever forget that look? Desolate loneliness, pathetic tenderness, melting compassion, yearning solicitude were there. I see a great tear spring unbidden to the cheek of this big-souled emotional man, and the last sound I hear as he hurries through the door into the night, is a sob. A crying little girl draws little attention, but a crying big hulk of a man, what a pitiful aspect!

Yes, "Peter went out and wept bitterly." When I saw that look I knew it would go to the mark. A flood of tender memories drowned his brazen indifference, and a welling gratitude and "love covered a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). A scene like this is full of human interest for me. It touches me at many an angle. It enfolds me like a warm cover of golden light. So Peter in his life is so high, yet so humble; so lofty, yet so lowly; so heavenly, yet so human that he is worthy to be called, "Your brother and mine, the apostle of conciliation for all classes and conditions of men, who holds out hope for every living man and as it seems also for the dead."

Would such a man as Simon Peter be pleased to know that he had been elevated to a Holy Roman throne, and given the keys of authority and power, temporal and spiritual, for millions of poor, sinning, stumbling, repenting creatures, such as he himself was? Let us hear from his own lips the answer in his admonition to the highest order of the early Church. "Feed the flock—neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3).

L

JUDE

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

JUDE (Judas) says he is the "brother of James." This indicates the prominence of James, so it must have been either James, the son of Zebedee, or the son of Alphæus, or "the brother of the Lord." There is nearly unanimous agreement that he was a brother of the Lord, and of James who wrote an epistle bearing his name. He indicates in verses 17, 18 that he is not an apostle, and thus must identify himself as "a brother of James," the bishop of Jerusalem. Being thus connected, Jude must have had prominence among the elders at Jerusalem where, likely, the letter was written as a general epistle to the churches of Palestine.

He is much exercised over the fact that "certain men have sneaked in unawares"; using religion as a smoke-screen, and practicing lasciviousness and denying the Lord Jesus Christ. These evil men are not called teachers. They were rather corrupters of morals. Jude, after the death of Peter and James, felt responsibility under the grave situation, and writes with much of the spirit of 2 Peter, harking them back to the faith which was once delivered unto the saints, and warning them from Old Testament examples, of the signal judgments attending sins of wantonness, impiety and sacrilege ("rail at glories").

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

Jude and the other "brethren of the Lord" did not believe on Christ till after the resurrection. In fact there is proof that they thought Him beside Himself. He begins his letter in almost the language of his brother James, calling himself "a slave of Jesus Christ."

To Jude, Christ is the preserver of the saints, the author of truth, mercy and eternal life. The Deity and preëxistence are indicated in verse five: "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this (all things), how the Lord (Jesus, the angel of the wilderness) having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not."

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

Whatever else may be said about this epistle, it is unique, and full of very surprising statements. He must have been steeped in Judaic thought and Levitic forms, and trained in a Jewish atmosphere. He quotes from the Rabbis and the apocryphal book of Enoch. He refers to a current Jewish legend among the Jews, concerning a dispute by the archangel Michael with the devil, over the body of Moses.

Origen says he drew this legend from a document called "The Assumption of Moses." How strange that these antinomian libertines should be rebuked for "railing at glories" which even Michael, when contending with the devil, would not do! Is the devil a dignitary whose name and power, to say nothing of his character, should elicit our awe and reverent consideration? He quotes 2 Peter 2:4 about "the angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day" (verse 5). We can throw little light upon these strange illusions and unique phenomena, but we can fully accept and be profited by the great moral principles underlying the whole epistle.

His vocabulary is rich in new and peculiar words and phrases and suggestive figures, but rather stilted in the arrangement of his sentences. His fondness for triplets is very marked. His salutation and benediction are both triple, three types of wickedness and three examples of divine retribution. Three classes of evil-doers and three ways of dealing with the sinning person are some of the many triplets used.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

In the interpretation of New Testament Scriptures, let us offer this word of caution, applicable particularly to later writings. Be careful to note the sense in which certain terms are used. Paul uses "righteousness" in three different senses; namely, righteousness as touching the law, as relating to the faithfulness of God, and the moral character of man. There are "works" pertaining to the keeping of the law, and "works" relating to the general conduct. So here we have "faith," or "the faith" meaning a body of doctrine, a creed that has grown up through the life and teachings of the apostles, and that has been generally accepted and adopted by the Church during the age in which the author of Timothy and Jude write their epistles.

Of the seven distinct uses of "faith," two others might be noted; namely, faith in the Scriptures, or in the testimony of God as revealed therein, and a divinely wrought faith, or justifying faith, as used by Jesus in the Gospels. Examples in the order named above are: "Hold fast the faith," "Your faith is spoken of," "A man is justified by faith."

LI

HEBREWS

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

THIS remarkable epistle was written by an unknown author to a particular and unknown church, but when and where nobody knows. Some early traditions ascribe the authorship to Paul, but practically all modern Bible scholars agree that this apostle could not have written it. With Origen of the third century, we can say, "Only God knows."

Apollos was a Christian from Alexandria, "eloquent," versed in the philosophy of Philo, independent, "mighty in the Scriptures," a friend of Timothy, and therefore in close touch with St. Paul—all of which pretty closely corresponds with the character of the epistle. His is the only name we could suggest for the honour of the authorship of the Book. It was written to a Hebrew Christian church somewhere in Palestine, and has no word for the Gentiles.

Through the first six chapters, the Lordship of Christ is the main theme, but with the avowed purpose of showing the superiority of "the better covenant" over the old Levitical services. These services are only emblematical and temporary, but are fully realized in Christ. Christianity is a perfect and final religion because it brings man into free access with God. "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God" (7: 19).

While he is sure it is the only perfect religion, the thesis which he sets out at much length to prove to these Hebrew Christians is, that it is far superior to the Levitical religion. His comparisons, which sometimes amount to contrasts, are between: (1) Christ and the prophets, (2) Christ and angels, (3) Christ and Moses, and (4) Christ and Aaron. Christ is the one and only prophet and agent of revelation who is a Son, and, therefore, as no other, He knows the mind of the Father (1: 1–2). Contrasted with angels, Christ is Son, they are servants; He is King, they are subjects; He is Creator, they are creatures. "Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant," but Christ "as a Son" (3: 5). Aaron, with little effect, offered as a priest the sacrifices of bulls and goats. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

The author has introduced to these apparently backward, prejudiced, Hebrew Christians, Jesus the Christ under the figure of a priest. Now Christ was not of the tribe of Levi, and how, under Jewish ordinance, could He be a priest? To obviate this difficulty, the author in effect says, I know that after the Levitical earthly order Christ could not be priest; but do not your Hebrew seers tell you of "Melchizedek a priest of the most high God?" Does not your psalmist sing of "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek?" Well, Christ is that priest; a priest without beginning or ending of days. Melchizedek was a righteous King of Salem (Peace). So Christ's priesthood is royal, righteous, peaceful and personal. Christ, in similarity to this mysterious figure, is immortal, invisible, eternal.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

We have just recounted how our author takes up, one after another, the prophets, the angels, Moses and Aaron, and shows how Christ is superior to each and all of them, basing his argument on the fact that Christ is the Son. They are simply symbols or shadows or types of the Archetype, the Son of the Father, "bearing all things by the word of his power." His thought is the same as that of John who sees Him "in the bosom of the Father," preëxistent, and Creator of all things. His main purpose in this exaltation of Christ is to indicate His fitness to make a satisfying revelation of God the Father.

The approach to the study of the incarnation is peculiar to "The Hebrews." He answers the question: Are the glory of Christ and His humiliation compatible? Christ's humiliation was "becoming" to God, and no blame attaches to Him. It was the perfecting of the Son, bringing Him into close touch and sympathy with us, and thus preparing Him to become the Captain of our Salvation (2:10, 17). Therefore we can "come boldly unto a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (4:16). Thus he concludes: "by the suffering and death" He was "crowned with glory and honour."

Great honour and reverence are shown the tabernacle. This writer's faultless rhetoric rises to its highest height as we stand in awe with the multitude and see the High Priest in gorgeous robes, on the Great Day of Atonement, enter into the holiest place, and through the blood of sacrifice in the presence of God, mediate forgiveness of sins of the people for the year just past. Jesus enters the "tabernacle not made with hands," into the realities of the heavenly holies, by "the eternal spirit," and through His own blood obtains eternal redemption.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

In St. Paul's letters we feel the tremor of great thoughts struggling for utterance. His sentences are broken by the very vehemence of attack on the emissaries of evil, or disjointed by the outbreaking sobs of a burdened heart. Not so here. The author of Hebrews, in the pomp of stately sentences, rounds every period in polished Greek with a literary finish unsurpassed elsewhere in the New Testament.

Paul passed through tragic experiences. A great cleavage is followed by a great shock of consciousness. One author was of a quiet, reticent, studious nature, brought up in the Christian church of Alexandria, and his conversion was, no doubt, like a quiet awakening at the dawn of day. He seems conversant with the doctrines set forth by Paul, but while fully according with them, he treats them in an original, independent and altogether different manner. In the matter of salvation, the Pauline stress is on faith. "The just shall live by faith." In Hebrews, obedience has the special emphasis. Christ is the author of salvation to them only who obey (5:9).

Pauline faith, through love, is a sanctifying power and derives its force from its author, Jesus Christ. In the Hebrews, faith transfigures the mind with the "heavenlies" and brings the future into the present. The world is only a shadow of the invisible and eternal beyond the veil where alone are found the realities. Nobility and true heroism result when these glorious realities fill the mind. We in no way disparage our author's views when we say they present prominently a psychological aspect, while Paul's view is an ethical one. Both are true to conscious experiences. This doubtless explains why, in the roll call of heroes in that wonderful eleventh chapter, are some names that would hardly appear if Paul had called it.

The author of Hebrews, at the dawn of man's history, presents the lordship of man. Death came through the devil to destroy man's high estate. Deliverance came through our great High Priest. The mystery here is that the sanctified and the sanctifier "are all of one"; meaning that Christ identifies Himself with the brethren by His great condescension. God rested on the seventh day and hallowed it; so will man at last enter into his Sabbatism of rest; a spiritual rest that is of the essence of that enjoyed by the Lord on the first Sabbath of man's history.

The highest point of spiritual enlightenment on the atonement is reached by this unknown literary, apocalyptic writer in the phrase "who through the eternal spirit offered himself" (9:14). The victim voluntarily offered Himself! It is a timeless offering and affects the eternal past and the endless future. It is a spiritual offering as opposed to blood-shedding. It is free, loving and holy; and having this ethical value gives the offering its eternal character.

On the "appearing," the resurrection, and the judgment, our author makes an original and interesting suggestion. "Apart from us," he says, "they should not be made perfect" (11:40). He implies here that the full fruition of all who are asleep in Jesus cannot be realized, till the whole earthly program of God through Christ is finished. The Church Triumphant will not be perfect in its completeness, till the Church Militant has fought its last battle and won its last victory.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

According to our author, earth is a shadow of heaven. Earth was made with reference to heaven. If there were no heaven there would be no earth. It is the substance that casts the shadow. The discovery of the great realities of heaven are made possible by the "Sun of Righteousness." We should have no shadow without the sun that shines behind the substance. Enlightened mankind should be able to follow the trail of the shadow and discover that eternal realm of "the undiscovered country."

The shadow is the absolute proof of a reality. But of the shape and character of that reality it gives a very unsatisfactory account. We shall not be satisfied till we awake in His likeness. Great, monstrous things shadowed forth into this world, that fill many with fear, may be only from the wing tip of a passing angel. This world is too small for the full display of all God's providence. We with our dull vision of a small segment cannot comprehend the whole sphere of God's truth and purpose. "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither have entered the heart of man the things that God hath reserved for them that love him."

In the Levitical sacrifice the great High Priest entered into the holiest place out of sight of the people. The people cannot go near that source of grace. "Will he come out safe?" they anxiously inquire. We are told now that our High Priest ministers "at the right hand of God" in heaven; that the people may "draw near" and "come boldly to a throne of heavenly grace"; that "He is set down" and, not like the standing High Priest of old, will minister there forever. "He entered once for all," and "He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

LII

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

THE KEY TO THE BOOKS

OF these three epistles the first is directed to the Gentile believers in Asia Minor; the second, containing only thirteen verses, to an "elect lady and her children," and the third, containing fourteen verses, to "the well beloved Gaius." They are called epistles, but have the character more of a theological discourse. They are the latest writings of divine revelation now extant, and while the author is not named, the matter and style and tradition are sufficient proof that they are from the pen of John the apostle.

That he calls himself an elder has no significance, and "John the Presbyter" must be identified with John who wrote the fourth Gospel, and was an eye-witness of the Lord and His earthly labours, as he states in his prologue. They were all written about the same time, A. D. 90–100, presumably from Ephesus, and practically with the same dominant purpose; namely, to confute errors; inward, insidious and corrupting. Some questioned the Lord's divinity and others His humanity. He confutes, not by denouncing error, but by his testimony to the truth.

He had seen the Word (Christ) with his own eyes, and had touched Him with his own hands, and experienced the joy of eternal life by spiritual union with Him. He bases his hope for all men on the principle of "the expulsive power of a holy affection." Light is holiness. God is Light. "In him is no darkness." The purifying power must come through communion with Him. We must "walk in the light as he is in the light" if we would find fellowship; and fellowship comes through love. "God is love," and hence "he that sayeth he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness."

Thus are these anti-christs of Cerinthus answered, who deny the Sonship of Christ, as are those of the Ebionites who deny His humanity and contend that His incarnation is a myth, and therefore God's fellowship with man is preposterous. The knowledge and acceptance of the truth in Christ drives darkness out and floods the spirit with light. In his Gospel we have seen that he contends that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In his epistles he witnesses that Christ is Jesus, the Son of man.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." The marks of a Christian are clearly drawn. If light has driven away the darkness of ignorance and superstition, the blight and folly of the world, and given a joyous vision, whose splendour overleaps the narrowing wall of prejudice and hate, the "love of the brothers" and the commandments of Christ will loom large, and sin and fear will flee away. "Unrighteousness is sin," and God is love and light.

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOKS

The teaching of John's Gospel and that of his epistles are the same; namely, that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." In this expression is taught the preëxistence of Christ, His incarnation, and His fellowship with the children of men. "God is love." "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him." Thus John teaches that Christ is a manifestation of the Father's love; that He unveiled, as it were, the Father's heart of love for the world.

In the succeeding verse the word "propitiation" is used. In Romans 3:25 is the only other place it is found in the Bible. Like "Logos" of Neo-Platonism, "propitiation" was taken over from the heathen world and sanctified to Christian usage. No longer does it mean a propitiation of the gods who are angry, but the revelation of a God who loves the sinful world, and, by the offering up of His Son, set His value on a soul.

We reverse the order when we exalt our love to God instead of God's love to us. Through Christ we know God has always loved us. Let us beware of Pharisaical hypocrisy. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins."

John teaches that Christ is the "only begotten Son of God." Without distinctly using the expression, it is on the Son of man that he places his emphasis. He had seen and touched Jesus who is the Christ. Abstract and impersonal and independent of place and circumstances, John's writings may be; they are above all realistic.

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOKS

In the march of progressive revelation from dawn to full day, we have reached the last stage in the journey, and in John's epistles the very last writing of the divine revelation. God talked to the Patriarchs, and they answered like "children crying in the night." The prophets and seers read the sign-boards of the highway through the fog; the disciples were blinded by the radiance of His real presence; but John, with the broad sweep of historical conception and perspective, drawing and imparting strength from his personal experiences, turns his eyes with joy and confidence toward the eternal future. The questions of sacrifice and ceremony have passed. The battles for freedom from the Judaic ordinances have been won and men no longer go through the long and tortuous way of Judaism to reach Christianity.

Hoffman says, "The Gospel of John seeks to deepen faith in Christ; the epistles set forth the righteousness which is of faith." A knowledge of the Gospel is taken for granted, and should be used as a commentary of the epistles. John sees this last enemy as an angel of light, and cries out his warning to any whom it may concern. Creed-making days have passed and errors are heretical.

Unlike Paul, John is not fitted for acute dialectics but speaks out intuitively, experienced truth, and on the great authority of the only living apostle. "Ye know" and "we know" are his ever-recurring words. Certitude rooted in experience speaks with confidence from the inspired pen of this aged apostle, calling them "little children," and speaking in a mild and mystical, yet clear and implicit manner the profoundest truths ever vouchsafed to man. "The profoundest scholar cannot fathom it, yet the simplest child may understand it."

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOKS

In these closing epistles it is clearly seen that God allows the fullest play of the personality on the part of the inspired writer. Paul approaches the enemy with a keen blade and a passionate eagerness, and strokes fast and sure. The mettle rings out, the sparks fly, and the foe is utterly routed. Peter seems to stand with half-closed eyes in sweet reminiscent mood. He sees the halcyon days when he walked with the Son of man; then with open eyes agleam with the light of the life perfected through Him, he inspires our breasts with hope. James, with the vehement fires of the prophets and the pointed proverbs of the wisdom books, speaks in the passion of the Hebrew and the rhythmical flow of the Greek. In Jude we feel the scorching scorn of invective against heretics. They are "filthy dreamers," "waterless clouds," "wandering stars."

John, the mystic philosopher, sits with bowed head in deep contemplation. If there are processes of logic in his mind they do not show in his speech. Calm and clear and authoritative the sentences fall from the inspired lips, and you feel the final word has been said. His confidence and assurance are born of an intimate association with Jesus Christ, such as no other enjoyed. He was "that disciple that Jesus loved"; and at the last supper, leaning his head on Jesus' breast, the apostle of love heard the heart beats of the Saviour of men. With such vital communings with the source of spiritual life, St. John was richly endowed with experienced knowledge of the deep things of God.

He was a quiet man and never rushed into words as did some of the other disciples. The noblest expression of his love was his loyalty to Jesus, but that loyalty spoke in action rather than in words. No exclamation broke from John in the mount of transfigured glory. At the risk of life he followed Jesus into the judgment hall. With a breaking heart he stood under the cross and heard those words that, above all, showed the love and confidence Jesus sustained toward this apostle, " Son, behold thy mother; mother, behold thy son." The day of dialectics and logic are gone, and the central figure of the circle of the élite proclaims from a rich experience the inheritance of the saints and the full daybreak of " life eternal."

LIII

REVELATION

THE KEY TO THE BOOK

THIS apocalypse, or "Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass" (1:1), begins and ends with such expressions as "the time is at hand" (1:3), and "I come quickly" (22:20). As "signified by his angel unto his servant John," this key-word "come quickly," should throw light into the darkness of this darkest book of the New Testament. Most likely the greater part of the prophecies were fulfilled in the early age of the Church, and the great principles underlying the Book found at least their primary application in contemporary facts and conditions.

This theory is called the Præterist interpretation. It is strongly bolstered by the opening verses, which presumably give an authentic introduction to the Book, and at least an intimation of its true purpose. Another theory is that of the Historical which claims application of these mysterious figures to the broad and salient features of history in the political world or in the Church, from the apostolic age to the end of time. Two opposing schools worked within this theory; one making the application of the symbols to affairs of secular history, the other holding strictly to the idea that the references are solely to the Church. The variety and variance of references seen in these symbols, under this theory, have about reduced it to an absurdity.

Another theory, called the Ideal or Spiritual interpretation, claims that these symbols and pictures are meant to set forth great spiritual principles that are eclectic in nature, with a variety of forms, and constantly in conflict. God's word is written in a language that can be read by generation after generation, and "divine prophecies have springing and permanent accomplishment throughout many ages."

A fourth system is called Futurist, because those adopting it refer all these prophecies in the most literal sense to "the last days." The letters to the seven churches predict seven particular ages of the Church successively, and the prophecies made in these mystic symbols are foreshadows of things to take place before the second coming of Christ. The days are literal days and Israel is the literal Israel; and the beast some antichrist who will reign over the world till Christ comes to destroy him. As to the accuracy of this theory nobody can speak with certainty till after the consummation of all things.

A brief outline of the Book is as follows:

(1) The prologue. (2) Epistles and the seven churches. (3) Seven seals. (4) Seven trumpets. (5) Seven mystic symbols: (*a*) Woman clothed in the Sun, (*b*) The Red Dragon, (*c*) The man child, (*d*) The wild beast from the sea, (*e*) The wild beast from the land, (*f*) The lamb on Mt. Zion, (*g*) The son of man on the cloud. (6) The seven viols poured out. (7) The enemies of the Church doomed. (8) The glories of the New Jerusalem. Of the seven churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia are without blame. Smyrna stood the test of Jewish persecution, and Philadelphia has brave soldiers, destined to conquer. Sardis sleeping and Laodicea lukewarm receive blame without praise; Ephesus backslider but militant, Pergamum faithful but leaning to fleshly lusts, and Thyatira charitable but sensual, receive both praise and blame.

Then opens the apocalypse. Seven seals are opened by the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The crowned rider on the white horse represents Christ, War rides on the fiery horse, then Famine on the black horse, and Death on the livid horse. In the fifth the martyrs under Nero cry for vengeance, and the last seals the forehead of God's people, and ends in the falling fiery censor from heaven to earth amid the resounding voices and crashing thunders. On the angel with the sun-like face, cloud-robed and rainbow-crowned, we can throw no light. The star-crowned woman represents the ideal church. Through the numerical equivalent (666) we are sure the Wild Beast from the sea represents Rome and Nero.

In the closing chapters, Rome is seen to be doomed and hallelujahs sound out. The pagan empire is flung in the dark abyss and the millennium dawns. Satan is unloosed and leads the armies of Gog and Magog, but is defeated; and the great climax comes in the final victory and the new heaven and earth wheel into sight, and the wide open gates of the Holy City flood us with heavenly glory. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

The historical persons and events are hidden so deeply under the apocryphal imagery, nobody can name them with assurance except where indications are clear. However, above the confusion of thunderous crashing sounds is heard the voice of Jesus, "I come quickly," and confidently the prayer, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

THE CHRIST OF THE BOOK

This is not an apocalypse of John but "an apocalypse of Jesus Christ," given by God to Christ and through an angel to John. It is not a revelation of Him as in 2 Thessalonians 1:7 (Parousia), nor concerning Him, but a revelation by Him and concerning the future. It is the testimony of Jesus touching "the things which must happen quickly."

The preëxistence and eternity of Christ are clearly set forth. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending," He says. In a spectacular appearance shortly

He will come as King and judge before the eyes of the nations. The false Christians shall be separated from the true and all rewarded according to their deeds. Satan and the Roman Empire that embodies his spirit shall be destroyed. The faithful who endure with patience the tribulations present and the greater ones to come, shall be rewarded by royal associations with the Kingly Christ.

To comprehend fully the meaning of the many references to Christ, one must know the Old Testament, traditional, and even pagan sources, from which John draws material. Christ will overcome the Roman Empire; the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, with a sword in His mouth, will rule the heathen. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords in the world of spirits. Through His resurrection He gains mastery over evil powers and will destroy death and Hades. He is the only one counted worthy to "take the book and open the seals thereof."

His deed, above all others that shine out for the Christian community, is the "making us Kings and priests unto God and His Father"; but the basis of dominion and power is expressed in the word "Lamb," which occurs twenty-nine times in the Book. Thus He is both a "Lion" and a "Lamb." He is both our King and our sacrifice. A Lamb on a throne is the strange figure that shows forth His humiliation and royalty. "These are they that have come up out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14).

THE PROGRESS OF THE BOOK

The internal evidence clearly indicates that the Book was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in the closing days of Nero's reign, about 68 A. D., or under the reign of Galba, assassinated Jan. 69 A. D. Through the influence of a very obscure passage in Irenæus, ancient scholars placed it last in the canon. It is conceded among scholars generally now that it is the first product from

John's pen, rather than the last. Read carefully 13:3 and you will find how the figure of the Beast who has "one of his heads slain," fits in with the short rule and tragic end of Galba. "And there are seven Kings; five are fallen, etc." (17:10), is true to the facts of contemporary history, further proving the early date.

It does not stand to reason that John in earlier years wrote the clear, calm, absolute and spiritual gospel and, after many years, so failed in mental and spiritual acumen as to write this dark, Judaic, uncertain symbolism. Has the apostle grown harsher as he grew older? No, the "Son of thunder" in Revelation became, after many years, the apostle of love in the Gospel and epistles.

Exiled to Patmos, a little rocky isle of the Ægean sea, during the Neronian persecution, he wrote the message of comfort to his fellow sufferers over twenty years before he sat quietly down in extreme old age in his home at Ephesus and wrote the fourth Gospel. Amidst the refinement of the Greek civilization of classical Ephesus, and years of bitter trials and unbroken holy communion, he wrote the Gospel and letters that bear his name. The Book calls itself prophecy, but the term apocalypse, applied to writings like that of Daniel and Ezekiel, seems applicable here. The Jews used such forms and veiled figures to set forth the first coming of the Messiah (Christ), and the Christians take it over and readapt it to the second coming. Unless we can clearly make this sharp distinction between prophecy and apocalypse we cannot get very far in our interpretation of this mystifying book. Prediction may be found in apocalypse, but it is by no means the predominant element, and belongs to the literary form. In dreams and visions, strange and unnatural forms come forth with angel interpretations and dark intimations on the future course of history. The old prophets proclaimed the judgments of God upon unrepentant Israel; these judgments were conditional.

The judgments of the apocalypse proclaimed in dark figures are usually unconditional. They are written, as here, to comfort God's people and, of course, are visited upon their enemies. This form was by no means the most highly credited but was written, as by our author, because of the hazard run in plain speech. These strange symbols drawn from the Old Testament and tradition were easily understood by the people to whom they were directed.

As we have seen, Peter had to allude to Rome under the name of "Babylon"; Paul steered clear of naming the notorious sinner in 1 Corinthians 5, and Luke dropped the curtain over a vision of blood in the Acts. Darker days never fell upon the early struggling Christian Church. The bloody swords of Nero were playing havoc. God seemed to forsake His people, and His Church was being rent to pieces. Men were thrown into the arena of wild beasts and their bodies, pitch-covered and fired, lighted with their lurid glow the gruesome scene. Many fled to caves of the earth, and some, like John, were exiled to lonely desolate islands. Under the light of such martyrdom, in code language of which the Christians held the key, this book of consolation and uplifted hope of a day of the Lord was written.

As in Judaism in the dark days of the exile, prophecy passed into apocalypse, so when the Satanic spirit of Rome threatened the utter extinction of the Christian Church, the direful crisis brought about the necessity of this transition. It may seem dull and meaningless to some critics. It served its own age well. We cannot undertake to draw the dim lines between the literal and the figurative, but more difficult still the discernment of the line between pictures drawn to express spiritual realities and visions of persons and deeds taken literally, but with ever a spiritual background. We can but believe that the forms of the vision of the millennial reign were taken by our author from Jewish sources as a vehicle for spiritual message.

It is rather distressing to note the baleful results these chiliastic implications have had on Christian history. The ridiculous schemes of exegesis; the clumsy, fantastic and impossible applications to historic persons and events have marred and distorted the poetic and spiritual meaning of this remarkable Book.

THE LESSONS OF THE BOOK

The old prophets of Israel stood amidst the wreck of the temple and the destruction of Jerusalem and proclaimed a new Jerusalem and a temple not made with hands. So amidst the bloody persecution of his people when famine and earthquake, martyrdom and exile seemed to combine their Satanic forces to destroy the last trembling hope of life in early Christianity, St. John, the apostle, rises above the confusion, puts the trumpet to his lips, and with a blast of judgment for the enemy, and with the poetic music of living hope for the faithful, he helps the trembling soul of the Church to see through its tears the new heaven and the new earth.

"The sun of human life seemed to be setting amid seas of blood." In vision we can see thousands of distraught souls driven by the storms on this bloody sea of demonish hate and hellish fury toward the rugged rocks of a dangerous coast. I look and pray and shudder and am helpless to aid. But dimly through the spray, I see a man standing ashore with a halo of inspiration about his brow. Ah, I hear the hallelujah chorus! The rocks turn to bread, the sea ceases her raging, becomes crystal clear and glassy calm, and I hear St. John of Patmos say, "These are they that have come up out of great tribulations, washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." In these great crises—these travail-throes of a new era, when all seems lost and the earth to melt with a fervent heat, God's angel steps out unafraid and restores order. This angel may not be dressed in heavenly vesture, but, like Abraham in the clothing of a Sheik, to hold up the great search-light of monotheism; or, like Moses in the dress of a nomad, to give law and order and salvation to the chosen people; or, like Paul in a worn cloak from Troas, to free the Christian Church from the trammels of Judaic ceremonialism; or, like John the apostle and exile of Patmos in the clothing and patterns of the synagogue, to drop the ladder of hope to the dark depths of despair, and the remnant of the faithful climb to safety and salvation.

Who can reward such men? The gold of earth can never pay the debt. God will have to attend to that. Our work is done. If I have given the reader an adequate perspective of the Bible, a view of the whole historic trend of this written revelation, I have not done my work in vain. We have traveled together from a garden of innocency to a city of holiness. Come to the more eager study of this divine library under the "Light of the world." Tremble at the thunder of its law, follow the trail of its history, be exalted in the vision of its prophecy, and shout in the triumphal entry of its Messiah. Worship at His empty tomb, and stand with St. John at the end of the world and hear the music of spiritual hope. "He showed me a pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb." The book you read last year is out of print; the Bible will be here when the heavens are rolled up as a scroll. Read the Bible and it will read you. Go through the Bible and it will go through you. It will give you literary taste, moral fiber, and spiritual vision.

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